

**INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**ROMANS SEVEN IN ITS LARGER CONTEXT**

By

Ngun Za Tlem

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the  
International Theological Seminary  
In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Theology

Los Angeles, California

May, 2022

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**Thesis Approval**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Within the religious and intellectual history of Christianity and Judaism in the first century, the Apostle Paul is a pivotal figure. Scholars, students, religious communities etc. are fascinated by Paul as a historical person and his writings (content, context, authenticity, theology, and reception). A significant number of articles are devoted to the study of the Pauline corpus. Indeed, the study of Paul and the Pauline texts appears to be an almost endless source of research.

Romans 7 has confounded interpreters for centuries, and its profound complexity continues to draw different responses. Interestingly, we find first in 7.13–20 that a twofold Torah is stated in this passage: Torah is seen as God's law on the one hand, and as the bond with sin and death on the other. So, what is Paul attempting to teach in this extremely rhetorical passage: a portrait of himself, Israel, Adam, and the Torah? What strikes me as particularly significant for Pauline theology in general, and for Romans in particular, is the relevance of Chapter 7.

The argument in Romans 7 has several fascinating parallels. The human heart, according to Paul, is a perpetual battleground between spirit and body, will and moral faculties. The struggle between evil and good "impulses" within us is depicted in this image of

inner moral turmoil. Romans 7 has sparked more debate than any other chapter in the Pauline corpus, and no subject in that tough passage is more contentious than the identity of the "I" who speaks. The question is critical, but it is best addressed after understanding the context and overall trend of Paul's argument in Romans 7. The passage's aim as well as its internal division must be considered. The chapter clearly defends Torah against any claims that it is synonymous with "sin" (7.7–12) or that it was the sole cause of death (7.13–20). However, in order to address insights, it is necessary to take a broader perspective in this chapter. This study will clarify and expand on the concept that Paul uses the word "I" in Romans 7 to represent himself in the legal dispute as an unregenerated Jew attempting to live under the law.

Mentor's Name: Dr. Robert Wyatt

361 words

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE DISCLAIMER**

As a non-native speaker of English, I am aware that my writing may at times lack clarity, though I have attempted to write as clearly as possible. Please note that the primary purpose of this work is to acknowledge a theory and to apply it to a particular context. I appreciate the editorial assistance I have received from various individuals, but acknowledge that the responsibility for this work is entirely my own.

## **DEDICATION**

To myself (ἐαυτοῦ μου).

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I want to give honor to Almighty God for his grace and guidance on me throughout all this course of work. My heartfelt thanks go to my supervisor Dr. Robert Wyatt, for his keen discernment, absurdly well informed thought, insightful analysis, wise advice, patience and encouragement which made this work possible. You were a source of constant inspiration throughout all this process. My sincere thanks to Dr. Mel Loucks, who is also my mentor, who has been given me valuable suggestions for my paper. They provided the direction I needed for this work. In addition, I cannot express my gratitude enough to Dr. Jae Suk Lee for his diligent efforts in correcting all of my thesis formatting. I owe a further debt of gratitude to the faculty of International Theological Seminary. Thank you so much for your support in everything throughout my studies here at this great school. God bless you all.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

In what many have called Paul's greatest epistle lies a difficult passage. In terms of biblical interpretation, Romans chapter seven is one of the most controversial passages. Few chapters in the Pauline corpus have aroused more controversy than Romans 7, and no subject in that problematic chapter is more disputed than the identity of the "I" who speaks there. The chapter appears to reflect Paul's inner conflict and anguish at the prospect of preserving the law. A number of scholars disagree.<sup>1</sup> As previously stated, the identity of the "I" who speaks in verses 7-25 is a crucial point for the understanding Romans 7. Who is it that "lived" without the law at one time but died "when the commandment came" (v. 9)? Who is it who, despite his best intentions, finds himself performing the exact evil he despises (w. 15,19)? Is Paul simply sharing his personal story? Is he mentioning his personal experience because it is representative of humanity as a whole, of Jews outside of Christ, or of Christians? Or is the "I" simply a figure of speech to portray humanity's dilemma in general, rather than a reflection of Paul's own moral struggles? The question is significant, but it's best approached after understanding the context and overall trend of Paul's argument in Romans 7.

Furthermore, when some readers contemplate Romans seven in relation to chapters six and eight, they often find it much more difficult to comprehend. Because they perceive the deliverance from sins in Romans 6 and the victory life in Romans 8, yet

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1. Stephen Westernholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 173.

they are perplexed by the struggle in Romans 7. As a result, various interpretations have been made. And the controversy over Romans chapter seven continues to cause conflict. After years of dispute, it's doubtful these differences of interpretation will be resolved anytime soon. To avoid various theological pitfalls, it is necessary to understand the context of Romans seven.<sup>2</sup> This study will seek to establish a solid outline for interpretation for the entire book of Romans while exploring its intricacies, especially in chapters six, seven, and eight.

It is generally accepted that Paul authored this letter between 55 and 58 A.D. to the Christian church located in Rome.<sup>3</sup> Obviously Rome was a Gentile city. However, there was a strong Jewish presence whether through heredity or conversion or a mixture of both within the church,<sup>4</sup> as much of this letter appears directed specifically toward the Jewish community. Paul continually addresses issues that any Jew would have been sensitive to.<sup>5</sup> The Mosaic Law and rituals, such as circumcision, are discussed. Abraham and other important figures in the Jewish heritage are mentioned. The Law may have even appeared to have been desecrated as Paul cleverly weaved his arguments. Though

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2. The context developed in this paper lean upon several sources. A major source is the historical context set forth as Robert Morgan attempts "to understand Romans as the religious text it is" (14) in Robert Morgan, *Romans*. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 9-15. Another major source is Jeffrey S. Lamp's "rhetorical overview of [Romans 5-8]" (1) as presented in Jeffrey S. Lamp, "Holiness and New Life in Christ: A Rhetorical Overview of Romans 5-8," a paper presented at the Joint Meeting of WTS/SPS, 20-22 March 2003. Also the writer of this paper recognizes that the meaning developed and presented in this paper is partly a result of the various contexts and realities which have influenced the writer as his identity has been formed through his experiences with and development within the Wesleyan-Pentecostal community. For an in depth look at the various influences, especially the 'latter rain' motif and the role of community, on the development how early Pentecostals interpreted the Bible and its continuing effect on Pentecostals today, please see Kenneth J. Archer, "Pentecostal Story: The Hermeneutical Filter for the Making of Meaning," *Pneuma* vol. 26 no. 1 (Spring 2004), 36-59. As Archer notes, "Pentecostals will engage Scripture, do theology, and reflect upon reality from their own contextualized communities and narrative tradition." (42) It is the goal of this author to present a paper which balances, or at least hold in tension, the historical, literary and reader-response criticisms while allowing the Holy Spirit freedom to 'break-in' with a 'fresh' revelation of His Word if He so desires.

3. Paul J. Achtemeier, gen. ed. "*The Letter of Paul to the Romans*," *The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*, Rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1996), 941.

4. Andrew Overman and William Scott Green, "*Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:1037-1054. specifically, p. 1048.

5. A.J.M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 59-65.

all these variables lean toward this letter being directed to the Jewish population, there are also many variables which point out that the Gentiles are addressed as well.<sup>6</sup> This epistle appears written to two groups, the Jews and Gentiles, and Paul sometimes addresses each group separately. For example, there are indications that Paul had a Jewish-Christian audience in mind: he greets his "fellow Jews" (16:3, 7, 11); the Jewish sin (2:1–3:8); and the remark in 7:1: I am speaking to those who know the law"; the Mosaic law, analyzed in terms of both its inadequacy (7:1–8:4; 9:30–10:8); and Israel in salvation history (chaps. 9–11). On the other hand, a Gentile-Christian audience is equally evident: Paul includes his readers among the Gentiles to whom he has been called to minister (1:5–6; cf. 1:13; 15:14–21); he addresses "you Gentiles" in 11:13–24); and Paul's plea that the Christians in Rome "accept one another" especially directed to Gentiles (15:7).<sup>7</sup>

The Jews found their identity in their religion. As the "chosen of God", their history was based upon being the ones who were "called out". Through obedience and submission to the Law along with their active and dynamic relationship with God, God was to be known to all the earth. However, the Jews found their salvation in the commandments instead of their relationship to God. Paul breaks into the picture and begins to preach a new message of "freedom" to the Gentiles. The message is simple, yet profound. "Salvation is by faith, not by works of the Law" This liberating Gospel message shook the foundational pillars of the Jewish faith. However, Paul was very intentional about which pillars he attacked. It was not Paul's intention to crush the Jewish faith, only to liberate it and to validate his mission to the Gentiles.

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6. Charles D. Myers, Jr., "Epistle to the Romans," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:816-829. "Paul's conspicuous use of the diatribe in Romans may also indicate something about the original addressees of this epistle. Paul may have known (or at least thought it to be true) that the Romans were a sophisticated, well-educated congregation which would be familiar with this literary device." (825)

7. D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 193.

The main purpose of this letter was to stress the importance of faith in one's relationship with God. As custodians of God's Law, it appeared that the Jews had gradually placed more emphasis on traditions and rituals than God Himself throughout the book of Romans. Paul systematically exposes their false pride in the Law and the Law's inability to provide justification. God's righteousness will come to all through faith because He looks at a person's heart, not their works.

Paul makes frequent side remarks about the Mosaic law in the early chapters of Romans without pausing to explain them or, in some circumstances, to explain them to people unfamiliar with his teaching (3:20; 4:15; 5:13, 20). Particularly noteworthy in this regard is 6:14: "For sin will not rule you, since you are not under law but under grace." The first portion of the verse follows the immediate context: Christians are not to "continue in sin" since they have "died to sin" by dying with Christ in baptism, leaving the "sphere" of sin's power. Christians are to live a new life "for God in Christ Jesus," just as Christ was raised from the grave (6:1-13). The argument that Christians are not "under law" has not been demonstrated, nor has it been shown how sin and the law are so strongly connected that being "under sin" equals also being "under law." Substantiation for these claims is first offered in chapter 7.<sup>8</sup>

Paul makes it abundantly clear in chapter six that believers have died to sin because grace was able to do that which the Law was unable to do: to set people free from sin. Paul continues by powerfully setting forth an ethical challenge where his imperatives state that it is the Christian's responsibility to be righteous. Having laid the ground work that salvation is through faith Paul begins the process of making his case as he systematically moves through Romans. He establishes that the Law cannot save and that it cannot sanctify.

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8. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 174.

Therefore, to understand this passage, one needs to come to Romans 7 in such a mood of meekness and receptivity. Also, one needs to ask what Paul has written thus far in the book of Romans in chapter 6 about the believer being united with Christ in his death and resurrection, instead of jumping directly to Romans 7. Then it becomes more clear what Paul's purpose is in Romans 7. Here, Paul is not answering questions about holiness, but rather explaining a struggle with obedience to the law and the place of God's purpose for the law in our lives. He repeatedly addresses the law in this chapter and wants the Jews in his audience to understand what role the law plays in their lives. The main objective of this paper is to understand the major issues in Romans 7 beginning from chapter 6 through 8. When placed within the context of the Pauline Corpus and the New Testament as a whole, the arguments made in Romans 7 grow clearer. In addition, this paper explores the apostle Paul's seeming identity as a Pharisee, a believer and his autobiographical writing in Romans 7. Further, this study identifies important statements made in Romans 6 and 8 that help form Paul's argument in chapter 7. For example, statements which serve as a linking force between the chapters, statements that help clarify arguments, statements that seem to express the opposite of Paul's argument in Romans 7, and lastly, statements characterized by a "then and now" perspective.

There are important divisions within chapter 7 that serve to strengthen its argument. These divisions include a specific address to the Jewish-Christian audience, a connection established through the Law, a description of Paul's spiritual powerlessness, a cry for spiritual deliverance. This paper will expand on these divisions. A deeper look at the Law and the Old man follows, including their roles outside of Romans in other Pauline letters, as well as the deadly outcome of fleshly desires. In summary, this paper seeks to expound the conflicting interpretations of Romans 7, emphasizing the importance of interpreting these controversies within the context of chapters 6 and 8 in order to yield the most appropriate interpretation of Romans 7.

### ***1.1. Statement of the Problem***

Romans 7 is a well-known passage for most Christians because it illustrates the struggle for sanctification. Numerous Christian interpreters have tried to identify who the man in Romans 7 is as they have struggled in their walk with God. Consequently, I began to read several commentaries, theological books, and heard a number of scholars' viewpoint on Romans seven. I realized that Romans seven has been one of the most debatable passages in the Bible. As enormous controversy has surrounded Paul's exact meaning in Romans seven, there are various interpretive challenges in this chapter. How does the chapter fit with the rest of the Epistle in Romans? How does the interruption of Paul's argument from chapter six to chapter eight affect the meaning? Is Paul the autobiographical element in Romans 7:7-25? Is Paul a regenerate Christian in Romans 7:7-25? Is Paul an unregenerated Jew in Romans 7:7-25? Or is Romans seven about the struggle with the Mosaic Law of an unregenerate person? Is Paul a model or prototype of anyone trying to live under the law in Romans 7:7-25? Is this a believer who has not yet "moved from Romans 7 into Romans 8," and is living without the Spirit, as Morris suggests.<sup>9</sup> These questions continue to infiltrate the mind of believers as they try to relate themselves to Romans seven. The disputes on this chapter produce different interpretations, drawing different applications from this passage.

This thesis will attempt to answer those questions and address the problems by analyzing the larger context from Romans six to eight. To avoid misconceptions on the passage, we must be willing to lay aside our presuppositions so that we can consciously analyze the historical and cultural setting of the text. Then we will be in a better position to let the author speak and then come to the legitimate applications for our walk with God.

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9. Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1988), 276.

### ***1.2. Statement of the Purpose***

The purpose of this study includes the following:

1. To carefully note and review the major problems and seeming contradictions of Romans 7:7-25 to the preceding and following immediate context to Romans 6 and 8.
2. To look at Romans 7 from the larger context of the Pauline Corpus.
3. To look at Romans 7 from the still larger context of the New Testament.
4. To determine the most appropriate intended meaning of Romans 7.

And for the study of this passage, Leon Morris states: “It is probable that the exact Paul’s meaning of Romans chapter seven, the question will never be answered to the satisfaction of everyone.”<sup>10</sup> However, the study is worth making to establish the actual meaning of the passage in the light of preceding and proceeding text of Romans chapter seven in its larger context.

### ***1.3. Research Methodology***

This thesis will introduce a qualitative grounded study of Romans chapter seven in its larger context. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the intending meaning of Romans chapter seven. The research plan, including the methodology, will be mainly based on library sources instead of interview or using questionnaires.

The study will use library research, and involves a historical-critical approach in an attempt to find the original author’s intended meaning, also referred to as historical-critical, authorial intent, original exegesis of the reading the Bible in its original context approach to the text.<sup>11</sup>

To establish the author’s meaning, the primary source (biblical text) will be studied closely to determine a genuine and accurate interpretation of the text. The

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10. Ibid., 276.

11. Subzero Tony, <https://geopolicy.wordpress.com/commentaries/religion-and-philosophy/biblical-exegesis/> accessed on, March 20, 20202, 6:00pm.



secondary resources will be exegetical and theological books, commentaries, dictionaries, and journals. Electronic and internet materials will be used, and a review of the literature, with specific details that are relevant for this research paper. Furthermore, the qualitative methods of research, will contribute to the evaluation of various views on the text.

#### ***1.4. Limitation of Study***

Due to the space allowed, availability of the resources, and to focus on specificity, this thesis is subject to the following limitations:

The area of the research will be predominantly limited to Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The other books of the Bible will be examined if needed for reference, and among these books, the Epistles of Paul will have higher preference than others. This thesis will not deal in detail with theological issues such as the law in general or the process of justification and sanctification. Detailed elaboration will only be given to explain their relationship to Romans chapter six and eight, especially if it is related to Romans seven.

The debate concerning whether Paul is speaking as an unregenerated Jew, a believer or autobiographically in Romans chapter seven will be discussed in this thesis. To find a correct understanding of how Romans chapter seven should be interpreted, I intend to explore the aspect of exegesis from Romans chapter six to seven. When if necessary, this thesis will also cover needed discussion regarding the law and sin in the light of biblical context.

One of the primary questions in Romans seven is whether Paul is talking about his struggle with sin in his pre-Christian life, as a model of a person under the law, or his life experience after he became a Christian as Christian struggling with sin. These three views will be discussed in this thesis.

However, to establish a correct understanding of how Romans 7 should be interpreted, this thesis will mainly focus on the exegesis of the text. When necessary, this thesis will also address issues needed discussion regarding the law and the struggle with sin in the light of biblical understanding.

### ***1.5. Significance of the Study***

The significance of this thesis is to demonstrate that conflicts of interpretation arise about Romans 7 within the broader perspective of the author's overall thought process. Accordingly, the passages immediately preceding and following the passage under study are particularly important to understand Romans 7. In chapter 6, Paul identifies the Christian as one who has "died to sin" (v. 2) and been "set free from sin" (v. 18), yet simultaneously battles sin, by stating, "Let not sin therefore reign in your body, to make you obey its passions" (v. 12). The basic fact established in chapter 6 that the Christian is already freed, from is crucial for a proper interpretation and application of Romans 7. The tension appears in the first few verses of chapter 7 where Paul highlights the "sinful passions" in the flesh (v. 5) against the "new way of the Spirit" (v. 6).

With Paul's continual contrasting faith to the Law, one enters the problematic second section of Romans. Paul begins to frequently use terms such as sin, slavery and death. The relationship of sin, death and the Law becomes the focus.<sup>12</sup> Paul's arguments will be examined, to determine whether he has Adam, Israel, and even himself or humanity in mind as he writes the passage. Therefore, by presenting Romans 7 in a larger context, the reader will be able to comprehend and examine the whole meaning of Romans 7 more accurately and will be able to make applications to their own spiritual journey.

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12. Morgan, 38. In these pages, Morgan details Paul's use of "right" language. Morgan shows how Paul is connecting righteousness to faith while at the same time emphasizing that there is an ethical and moral dimension to righteousness.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PAUL PERSONIFIED IN ROMAN SEVEN**

There has been a great deal of debate about Paul's actual meaning in Romans 7, particularly in verses 14-25. Augustine's perspective on its meaning influenced later interpretations, and many people's perspectives are contradictory. The majority of interpreters have viewed 7:7-13 as a study of Mosaic law. However, the structure, language, content, analogies, and aim of 7:14-25 have all been debated throughout church history, particularly who is depicted and what type of experience is described. As a result, I will discuss the three different perspectives on who Paul is portraying in 7:14-25.

#### ***2.1. Paul as a Pharisee***

To present the passage as Paul describing his experience as a Pharisee, means Paul's pre-Christian experience. In other words, when Paul looks back on his life before Christ as a Christian, he sees that he wasn't a believer. First of all, it is essential to look at the text as a whole in order to have a proper knowledge of it. When we look at Romans 7 as a whole, we find a clear outline in verses 5-6, which states: "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions operated through the law in every part of us and bore fruit for death. But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law." Verse 5 is clearly the man under law, describing his life experience under the flesh and old life which leads to death. But verse 6 contrasts with the preceding verse. It states a man has been released and died to his "old life" (from the bondage of the law), and

received the Spirit. Schreiner states; “Romans 7:7–25 unpacks verse 5, and Romans 8:1–17 unpacks verse 6.”<sup>13</sup> We see how the law causes death to people who are in the flesh (7:14–15), as well as how the Spirit brings life to those who belong to Jesus Christ (8:1–17). As a result, Romans 7:5–6 provides a clear preview of what Paul would say in 7:14–25 and 8:1–17.

Schreiner analyzes Paul’s argument by the questions Paul asks. Paul’s questions seem to arise because of Romans 7:5, since Paul had said that our sinful passions were aroused by the law and produced death. So the question in Romans 7:7 naturally arises: if sinful passions were provoked by the law, is the law sinful? Paul categorically rejects such an option, arguing that the law is spiritual and good (Rom. 7:12). But sin used the law as a launching point in our lives to bring about our spiritual death. Paul proceeds to ask another question in Romans 7:13: “Therefore, did what is good cause my death?” The “good” here is clearly the law. But notice the question asked: did the good law cause my death? The answer is then given in Romans 7:13b–25. But this is a powerful statement supporting pre-Christian experience since Paul explains how sin used the law to bring about our death. The argument flows perfectly with what Paul states of unbelievers in Romans 7:5: “While we were outside of Christ, the law worked in our members to separate us from God, to kill us.” And there’s the total defeat in Romans 7:13–25. Many Christians have connected with the anguish and incapacity of the “I” in Romans 7:13–25 throughout history. This is referring to a total defeat.

The following phrases are frequently used to argue that Paul is a Pharisee: the “dead” condition of the person in verse 9, “sold under sin” as the person in verse 14, “nothing good dwells” in verse 18, and he knows how to do good but is unable to do so in verse 25. Finally, he mentions the man’s eventual deliverance when he comes to

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13. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 259.

salvation.<sup>14</sup> In other words, he is describing complete and total captivity to sin. He is a prisoner of sin. Davies states “it is difficult not to believe that the Apostle is describing his experience as a Jew suffering under the law.”<sup>15</sup> In Romans 8:6, Paul writes, to be carnally minded is death. So we must conclude that Paul is reflecting on his experience under law, convicted, but still dead in his trespasses and sins. “In that context (cf. Gal 2:15: ‘we who are the Jews by birth’), Paul is explaining his experience as a Jewish convert to Christianity and, as in this passage, demonstrating that he needed to be freed from the binding force of the law if he was to serve God,” according to Moo. We can see how a Jew who converts to Christianity would “die to the law,” because the Jew would have up under the law's rule.”<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, Paul states “For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being” Many devout Jews loved and delight in God’s law and yet didn’t know God (Rom 10:2). His mention of the mind serving God’s law points to its unfulfilled desire to do right (7:16, 22–23), hence still refers to the perspective dominated by the flesh (8:5–7). Tom Schreiner, states that when Paul says “I delight in the law of God, in my inner being (*esō anthrōpon*)” (Rom. 7:22), or when he says “I, my very self (*autos egō*) serve the law of God with my mind” (Rom. 7:25), he is expressing his pre-Christian experience.<sup>17</sup> We see the same thing again in verse 23: “But I see a different law in the parts of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body.”<sup>18</sup> He is a slave under the dominion of the slave driver: sin. He is in desperate need of the Redeemer. His mind, including his reasoning faculty and

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14. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Zondervan Publishing House and Galaxie Software, 1999), 586.

15. W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: S.P.C.K, 1948), 25.

16. Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 417.

17. Schreiner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Romans*, 343.

18. Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary Series* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth, 2009), 108.

19. Moo, *the Epistle to the Romans*, 450-451.

conscience, affirmed the law of God, but his flesh (natural appetites) still served the law of sin. He reiterates his dilemma. What a miserable man. One may ask, what, then, of the apparent conflict between the despairing struggle on this paragraph and the complacent self-satisfaction of Phil 3:2-11? In Phil. 3 Paul is describing his status from a Jewish perspective. But in Rom. 7, his pre-Christian experience from a Christian perspective. In the same way, a new, convert will be able to look back at his pre-Christian existence and find there the inner conflict, frustration, and despair (Rom 7: 21-23)<sup>19</sup>

Without understanding the context, many appeal to their own experience and the testimony of other "Christians" in interpreting these passages of Scripture in order to claim that this experience is universal in all believers. But notice that the language Paul uses does not describe the life of a Christian under strong temptation, occasionally lapsing into sin. The rhetoric depicts the complete dominion of sin.<sup>20</sup> However, when Paul speaks of a released and delivered man, he is referring to someone who has been completely defeated and imprisoned by sin. Thus, this passage contradicts how Paul describes Christian experience in Romans 6 and 8.<sup>21</sup>

Some argue that, the shift from past-tense verbs in Romans 7:7–11 to present-tense verbs in verses 14–25 is a clear representation of Paul's current Christian life. But the adjective "present" does not necessarily always indicate "present moment," according to Schreiner. Because present-tense verbs can refer to the past or the future in the indicative, the temporal character of an action must be inferred from the context. The usage of the present tense here corresponds with the state or condition of the person. Paul is highlighting one's legal enslavement, subordination, and powerlessness. His choice of the present tense does not refer to the past, but rather emphasizes the servitude of life

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20. George E. (Jed) Smock, <https://www.gospeltruth.net/walkinthepirit/witsrom7.htm>, accessed on April 2, 2022, 9:41pm.

21. John Phillips, *Exploring Romans* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1969), 120.

22. Thomas R. Schreiner, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/romans-7-does-not-describe-your-christian-experience/> Accessed on February 22, 2022, 10:35pm

under the law. In other words, Paul has been explaining how sin is more powerful than the law from verses 7 to 13. He explains how sin is stronger than the unregenerate man from verse 14 until the end of the chapter. His shift in purpose is shown by the change in tense. The final rhetorical reason for changing to the present is to show a climax in Paul's legal experience. Sinners are at different stages. With a desperate plea finally, in verse 24, Paul cries out in utter desperation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This is a contemptible and despicable man, who sold himself to the slavery of sin.<sup>22</sup> We know that Paul has already explained the victory of death for the believer in Romans 6:15; 7:4. Therefore, a man who has died with Christ cannot be enslaved to sin again in Romans 7:14.<sup>23</sup> Referring to Paul as a man in need of such deliverance is an obvious contradiction to his statement as a free believer, and also his life and ministry following his conversion. He knows exactly who he is serving, and he does so with clarity and blameless (1Cor 4:4; 2 Tim. 1:3).<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, there are no direct references in 7:14-25 to Jesus or the Spirit. When we look at the passage, the Holy Spirit is never mentioned in Romans 7:7–25. But Paul refers to the Spirit 15 times in Romans 8:1–17, suggesting that the person described in Romans 7:7–25 is one who doesn't have the Spirit in his life. The essence of what it means to be a Christian is to be indwelt with the Spirit (Rom. 8:9). We see in both Romans 7:14 and 7:18 that the one described is of the "flesh," one who is still in the old Adam, one who is unregenerate. Also, an account of Paul's Christian experience in chapter 6 and 8, where Paul definitely describes the Christian life, abounds with references to freedom and the Spirit. The previous context of 6:15-23 describes a

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23. Robert Haldane, *Geneva Series of Commentaries Romans* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 287.

24. *Ibid.*, 121.

25. Richard Nigard Longenecker, *Epistle to Romans: New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 819.

situation in which sin appears to have lost its power and should therefore be no longer able to dominate the Christian in the way 7:7-25 depicts.<sup>25</sup>

## **2.2. Paul as a Believer**

I will contrast the previous interpretation with an alternative interpretation: Paul as a Christian. The argument that Paul is a believer who is delivering a personal testimonial of his own inner struggle with righteousness answers why Christians still struggle with sin. In this interpretation, Paul is stating that while God's salvation justifies, it does not result in instant outward perfection. It does, however, guarantee outward perfection on the day our flesh is completely destroyed, either by death or by our Lord's second coming. Chapter 7:14-25 is a perplexing passage, as John Piper remarked. This is because Paul also states, "I am of the flesh, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14); "I do the same thing I despise" (Rom. 7:15); "I see in my members another law..." (Rom. 7:23); "wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24); and "I serve the law of sin with my flesh" (Rom. 7:25). (Rom. 7:25). These self-defeating statements "do not sound like the person who speaks in Romans 8:2."<sup>26</sup>

We notice the similarity in thought and language between 7:6 and 7:25. In 7:6, there is the victory over bondage to the law followed by the great result: "So that we serve (*douleuein*) in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code." Both of these verses (7:6, 25) express the effect or result (verse 6: *hōste*) "to serve" God in a new way. This "service" in verse 25, Paul makes explicit, is not the service of the law of sin with the flesh but the service of God by the Spirit. Therefore, the argument of Romans 7:13–25 is not limited to unpacking pre-Christian experience of Romans 7:5. It

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26. Ernest Best, *the Cambridge Commentary on Romans* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 85.

27. John Piper, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/romans-7-does-describe-your-christian-experience/> accessed on, May 4, 2022. 8:43pm.



is also unpacking the Christian experience of Romans 7:6 (in contrast to Schreiner's statement on these two verses of Paul as a Pharisee.<sup>27</sup>

Paul now in verse 14 switches from the past (7:11) to the present tense: "I am a man of flesh." This verse marks the change from the past tense so common in the previous section to the present, which is equally characteristic of the verse to which we now come. As we have already noticed, the most natural way of understanding this is to see it as pointing to Paul's present experience.<sup>28</sup> Tim Keller identifies 7:14-25 as being entirely about mindset, because Paul makes it clear in 7:4-6 that the law arouses wicked impulses. And, as Paul writes elsewhere (Col 2:23), rules prohibiting particular actions have no ability to stop our "sensual indulgence"—what he calls our "flesh" in Romans 7. A normal Christian who has not yet learned to rely on the Spirit for transformation and freedom from sin is described in Romans 7. In Romans 7:14, Paul is referring to his present condition rather than his glorious position. There is evidence that a true Christian can engage in carnal behavior (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 1-4). We must acknowledge that Romans 7: 15-24 is the apostle's very real experience and he has gone through the same struggle that the apostle portrays here.<sup>29</sup>

Paul expresses his genuineness in delighting with God's law. "I delight in the law of God, in my inner being" (Rom. 7:22). The term "inner being" (*esō anthrōpon*) and "In my inner being" is literally, "according to the inner man." The inner man is used in 2Cor. 4: 16 and Eph. 3:16. Paul speaking in Romans 7:22 is trying to tell us why he says "delight in the inner being" (Rom. 7:22) and why he says "I, my very self (*autos egō*) serve the law of God with my mind" (Rom. 7:25). Yet, recognizing the facts of experience, Paul said he saw another law or principle at work within him. Paul called it a "sin living in me" (Rom. 7:17, 20), "evil" right there with me (v. 21), and "the sinful

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28. Ibid.

29. James D.G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1-8* (Milton Keynes: Word Publishing 1988), 366.

30. Timothy Keller, *Romans 1-7 For You* (North America: The Good Book for You, 2014), 146.

nature” (vv. 5, 18, 25). The indwelling principle of sin is constantly trying to gain victory and control (cf. “slave” in vv. 14, 25 and “slaves” in 6:17, 19-20), of a believer and his actions. This suggest that he is “falling short,” which is the precise meaning of *harmartia*.<sup>30</sup> Piper states: Rom. 7:6 does not mean we never stumble back into experience of captivity. In fact, the “therefore” of Romans 7:25 explains that the victory does not make the warfare past; it makes it possible and real.<sup>31</sup>

To expand on the preceding paragraph, Paul’s statement on “For when I do evil I do not do it voluntarily. On the contrary, I act against my better judgment, my will and my consent. It is rather the flesh, sin living in me,” the false, the fallen, the counterfeit “I” which is “indwelling sin” (17, 20), or flesh (18). Augustine rightly states that there is always a “depths motive” for every sin.<sup>32</sup> Having given the graphic description of inward conflict, as he identifies with believers under the law, Paul now summarizes the situation in terms of their double reality.<sup>33</sup> This is “the two sidedness of Paul’s experience”, being simultaneously in Adam and Christ, enslaved and liberated.<sup>34</sup> Speaking as before God, who alone searched the heart, and measuring himself by the holy law in all its extent, he confesses himself to be carnal and sold under sin. On this verse Calvin also has remarked, “This passage clearly proves Paul is disputing concerning none but the pious, as a regenerated.”<sup>35</sup>

The point is that, so far as we can tell from Paul’s own testimony (Phi 3:4-6), Paul knew no such frustration or self-depression in his preconversion days. It is not Paul the devout Pharisee who speaks here, but Paul the humble believer; and whoever else he

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31. Frank E. Gaebelein, *the Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 79-80.

32. John Piper, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/romans-7-does-describe-your-christian-experience/> accessed on, May 4, 2022. 8:43pm.

33. R. S. Pine-Coffin, *Saint Augustine Confession* (New York: Penguin, 1961), 47.

34. John R. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grow, IL: Inter Varsity, 1994), 213.

35. *Ibid.*, 216.

36. John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Library, 1973), 225.

speaks of, he certainly speaks of himself. Evidently conversion for Paul meant becoming aware as never before of the power of sin in his own life (cf. Phi 3:7-9).<sup>36</sup> Paul's cry in 24 expresses desire, not despair. He wants to be rescued "out of this body of death", i.e., out of his sinfulness. This is an example of the inward "groaning" of God's people for redemption (8:23). Dunn suggest that what we see here is the already/not yet tension. Paul recognizes the value of the law and his bondage to sin, knows that God's freed him, but doesn't experience that freedom fully.<sup>37</sup> Stott added, Paul's answer is Jesus Christ. He mentions only "Jesus Christ our Lord." It is by the yet future coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for us. It is then that this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption.<sup>38</sup>

The apostle's testimony was, "the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin" (7:14).<sup>39</sup> That phrase, "I am sold into bondage to sin," doesn't mean "all of me," because he stated in Romans 6, that we're sold into slavery into Christ and freed from sin.<sup>40</sup> Hodge, in explaining what Paul meant, says, "He does not intend to say that he was given up to the willing service of sin; but that he was in the condition of a slave. His will may be one way, but his master may direct him another. This is a description of slavery. The expression, "sold under sin" means ... acts thus performed are not the true criterion of character (v 14). The contrast between the willing servant of sin in 6:16, 17 (he is lost!) and the unwilling servant of sin in 7:14-25 (he is saved!). As the apostle John so emphatically states: "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us," (I John 1:8).<sup>41</sup>

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37. C.E.B. Crandfield, *Romans A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987). 166.

38. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1-8*, 411.

39. Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 213.

40. *Ibid.*, 57.

41. Charles R. Erdman, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, NP), 89-90.

42. Charles Hodge, *A commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 235-36.

Luther in his commentary on Romans states on “I am carnal”; “Because it is characteristic of a spiritual and wise man that he knows that he is carnal. It does not mean that he never does the right, but as a strong expression for his inability to do the right as he would like to.<sup>42</sup> MacArthur notes “it is correct to understand Paul here to be speaking about a believer. This person desires to obey God’s law and hates his sin (vv. 15, 19, 21); he is humble, recognizing that nothing good dwells in his humanness (v. 18); he sees sin in himself, but not as all that is there (vv. 17, 20-22); and he serves Jesus Christ with his mind (v. 25). Paul has already established that none of those attitudes ever describe the unsaved (cf. 1:18-21, 32; 3:10-20).<sup>43</sup> Indeed the Apostle here shows that he (as a spiritual man) serves only one Law, while he resists the other.<sup>44</sup> Paul is deploring evil in his fallen nature, delighting himself in God’s law, and longing for the promised full and final salvation, seems to provide ample evidence of being regenerate and even mature.<sup>45</sup>

The law is shown to be ineffective, either for justification (it cannot put the sinner in right standing with God), or for sanctification (it cannot enable the justified sinner to overcome evil while he remains in this body).<sup>46</sup> The apostle Paul as the renewed man condemns himself, and justifies God, even while he confesses and mourns his inability to conform to the requisitions.”<sup>47</sup> Having so fully declared the nature and extent of the law, the Apostle now proceeds to exhibit in its light the inward state of his own mind, and that internal spiritual warfare.<sup>48</sup> Further, despite his identification with Jesus Christ’s death, he cannot in his own power resist his indwelling sin nature. We still face conflicts between

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43. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1954), 112.

44. John C. MacArthur, *the MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson Reference and Electronic Publishers, 2005), 1528.

45. Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, 114.

46. *Ibid.*, 207.

47. David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *Romans: An Interpretive Outline* (Neptune, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1963), 56.

48. *Ibid.*, 113.

49. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 164.

our regenerated minds (or new natures) and our sin natures or capacities.<sup>49</sup> “We ...groan inwardly (cf. 7:24) as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies,” (Rom. 8:23). Paul looked for deliverance from indwelling sin but not while in the flesh, and neither can we! Notice his conclusion, “So then I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin,” (7:25).<sup>50</sup> Romans seven ends with the solemn fact that he is still sinner even after he has been saved (born again). But chapter eight opens with the wonderful assurance that “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” The Lord has already delivered him from the condemning power of sin and will, in the resurrection, deliver him from sins. He will raise him from the dead in the last day with an incorruptible body completely free from sin (cf. Rom. 8:22, 23).<sup>51</sup>

### 2.3. *Paul as a Prototype*

The third view on Romans 7:14-25 looks at Paul as a model for anybody attempting to live under the law. Instead of answering personal concerns, the Apostle Paul is writing about the law. It is a careful analysis of the treatment of the law.<sup>52</sup> This argument suggests that Paul is dealing with those who are attempting to justify themselves through the law. In other words, this argument supports that Paul is dealing with the people who are trying to obtain justification through the Law.

The main reason Romans 7 is perplexing is because Paul repeatedly says in Romans 7:14-25, "I do what I cannot help doing," making it appear as if Paul's entire existence is enslaved to sin. However, as some critics (Murray, Kümmel, and Lloyd-Jones, among others) have argued, when Paul says "I," he is not referring to himself, but

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50. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *the Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Weaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 468-467.

51. Thomas, *Romans: An Interpretive Outline*, 60.

52. *Ibid.*, 62.

53. Morris, *The Epistle to Romans*, 276.

rather he is acting out the life of someone who is attempting to be justified under the law. Wright notes “the double identity of the ‘I,’ and the double identity of Torah, are stated in terms of double slavery that has ironically characterized the whole passage of Romans. Thus it is inevitable to support various different readings of the whole passage.”<sup>53</sup> According to Murray, Paul's experience in Romans 7 stemmed from his own depravity, as well as the operations and effects of God's law as it was registered in his consciousness. He understands that his experience is not unique. As a result, he's writing as if he's describing what must happen in the lives of others.<sup>54</sup> People in the ancient world often wrote in the first-person singular ("I") when they wanted to say something more general. Thus, Paul is doing this in the rest of the chapter, rather than transcribing his own struggles with the law. He is not talking about the human race but about Israel, in particular.<sup>55</sup>

Wilder, citing Kümmel's argument, claims that the figure of Romans 7 is purely rhetorical: Paul does not speak of his life pre or post conversion. He makes no reference to himself and instead focuses on the human encounter with the law. His analysis represents a dimension of the text that most interpreters had overlooked. In Romans 7, Paul describes the human being living “in the shadow of Adam.” The “I” who encounters the commandment, just as Adam did in the first transgression (vv. 8–9), that commandment brings death. It gives life to “sin” and sets loose sin’s power to deceive (7: 9–11). The human situation has changed since Eden, and sin resides and arises within the human heart (7: 8,13,14–25).<sup>56</sup> Dodd states Paul is "performing" like someone who is aware of God's Law (as given to Moses) but is unable to obey it. The Holy Spirit frees us from the power of sin (Romans 6), from the responsibility of the Law (Romans 7), and

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54. N. T. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 206-7.

55. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 254-255.

56. N. T. Wright, *Romans: For Everyone Bible Study Guides* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 43-44.

57. Terry L. Wilder, *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: Three Views of Romans 7* (Nashville: B and H, 2011), 69.

empowers us to live as Jesus did (Romans 8). Looking through Romans 6, 7, and 8, as a whole, you can see how Paul is attempting to express his point. It is the place of law that he is referring to without the help of the Holy Spirit. The point is that it's impossible to see Paul using the "I" to characterize himself if we realize that Romans 7 is an argument that must flow from Romans 6 and into Romans 8.<sup>57</sup>

Romans 7 outlines the idea of freedom from the law: the law actually leads to death. Because it leads to death, there is a contradiction with himself. It is strange that Paul in 7.7ff. speaks in the first person singular. The Reformers found in 7, 14 ff. a proof for their theological thesis that the Christian *sei simul iustus et peccator* - even the believer stays in conflict. But 7.25a and especially chapter 8 show that Paul is here describing the people "under the law", i.e. meaning the pre-believing people namely every human being, not just himself.<sup>58</sup> It is true that the first person singular indicates that he speaks of himself alone. The passage is so personal in tone that it appears impossible to exclude Paul's own experience, but he formulates his experience in general terms (e.g. in 7:7-13). Thus what he writes is true not for himself alone but for other. He regards it as true of all men.<sup>59</sup> Moo writes "we conclude, then, that *egō* denotes Paul himself but that the events depicted in these verses were not all experienced personally and consciously by the Apostle. It is in this sense that we argue for a combination of the autobiographical view with that identifies *egō* with Israel. *Egō* is not Israel, but *egō* is Paul in solidarity with Israel."<sup>60</sup>

In fact, what we get in Romans 7:7-12 is Adam and Eve's story, and in this chapter at least, the "I" to which Paul refers is the "I" who lives out Adam's story. Then, Paul draws from the story, apart from Christ, when we want to do one thing and yet end

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58. C.H. Dodd, *the Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (New York: Harper and Row, 1932), 104-105.

59. Hans Conzelmann and Andreas Lindeman, *Arbeitsbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Presse-Druck Augsburg, 1991), 281.

60. Best, *The Cambridge Commentary on Romans*, 84-85.

61. Douglas J. Moo, *the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 431.

up doing another.<sup>61</sup> This is the structure of Paul's Soliloquy in 7:14-25: The presence of the malevolent forces of "sin" (ἡ ἁμαρτία) and "one's own sinful nature" (ἡ σάρξ μου) frustrating every person's best intentions in 7:17-20; The dysfunctional experience of knowing what is good but doing what is evil (7:21-23); The human cry of despair and a call for rescue (7:24); A parenthetical interjection: "But thanks be to God, deliverance is through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7:25a); The conclusion of the matter with respect to people's attempts to live their lives apart from God, that is, by means of their own abilities (7:25b).<sup>62</sup>

Paul is using the first singular and present tense figuratively, not literally. For example, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Paul was not alive at that time, but he figuratively puts himself into the position of the people who were alive saying "I was alive". The same pattern continues throughout Romans 7. He refers to the age of the law and the people with the old sinful nature. Similarly, when Paul therefore says "but I am carnal, sold under sin" he is using himself and present tense figuratively, putting himself into the place of those who lived in the age of the law. Paul uses the same way of speaking (first singular, present tense) throughout the remaining of Romans 7. What Paul is describing is a miserable situation. To summarize: here is the question of Paul in Romans 7:24: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? The answer is "Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."<sup>63</sup> It is clear that Paul does not speak personally about himself; he uses "I" in a general sense. Paul describes in general terms the objective situation of the man outside faith (in Christ).<sup>64</sup>

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62. David L. Bartlett, *Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 70-71.

63. Nigard Richard Longenecker, *Epistle to Romans: New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 827.

64. "Wretched man that I am" – *A brief commentary on Romans 7* <https://www.jba.gr/Romans-7-commentary-wretched-man-that-I-am.htm>, May 3, 2022. 10:58pm.

65. Han Conzelmann, Hans. *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 230.



It is impossible to accept that a regenerate and mature believer like Paul could describe himself as sold as a slave to sin (14), when he has just celebrated his transfer to another slavery which in reality is freedom (6:6, 17-18, 22). Paul was impersonating an unregenerate person, at least until 8:1ff., and was portraying the human being in Adam, not in Christ. The “I” of verse 14 must be the whole person, for verse 15 shows that this “I” includes both the willing of the good and the doing of the evil. Again, in verse 23 it is the whole person who has been made sin’s “captive,” and it is the whole “wretched man” who cries out for deliverance from the tyranny of sin and death in verse 24. In the light of 8:2, this can only be a picture of the non-Christian.<sup>65</sup> Keener argues that, Paul summarizes 7:7-24 here: the dual allegiance of the person trying to achieve righteousness only by human effort, without becoming a new creation in Christ.<sup>66</sup>

The third view argues that even though Paul speaks in the first person in Romans 7:7-13, this by no means proves that he is relating personal experience. Similarly, the understanding of the “I” can be maintained in 7:14-25 as well; for, as we have seen, the argument of the subject remains the same throughout 7:7-25. Thus, the answer to the question of whether Paul could have written 7:14-25 of his Christian experience must be a definite “No!” Paul could not describe himself as a Christian as fleshly “sold under sin” (7:14), and sin’s “captive” (7:23). He clearly states in that he does not live according to the flesh (2 Cor. 10:3; 13:6), and but rather feels fit to serve as an example for others (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9). Moreover, the standard he mentions for the Christian is to live “according to the Spirit,” possessed by a believer (Rom. 8:9, 13), make no such possibility.<sup>67</sup>

Galatians 5:17 is often cited as evidence which refers to a description of the moral struggles of the Christian, but this has a whole lot different meaning. It clearly states a

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66. Phillip, *Exploring Romans*, 205.

67. Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary Series* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth, 2009), 738.

68. Westerholmn, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 183.

Christian needs not to give in to the flesh, and that victory is possible for those who “walk in the Spirit.” The opposite is true of the subject of Romans 7:14-25, who finds himself the impotent slave of the flesh. The Christian of Galatians 5 has the Spirit and has a choice; the subject of Romans 7 does not. If Romans 7:14-25 is a witness to a Christian inner struggle in Christian living, then, the passage clearly states a total helplessness, slavery to sin, and despair of deliverance. To relate one’s own experience can mislead the exegetical task. In addition, we have Paul’s own testimony in Galatians 1:13-14 and Philippians 3:4-6 to the nature of his pre-conversion devoutness, and life according to the law. Philippians 3:6 and Romans 7:14-25 are simply irreconcilable, if the latter is interpreted of Paul’s pre-conversion experience. Thus, we have the rhetorical understanding of the “I” as depicting a man under the law. Paul became convinced of the impotence of moral strivings outside of Christ, and clearly the cry for deliverance in 7:24 is a cry of sinner.<sup>68</sup> Or Rom. 7:14-24 is not a confession of Paul describing his erstwhile inner division under the Law, but is that picture of the objective situation of man-under-the-Law which became visible to him only after he had attained the viewpoint of faith. The cry, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death” (v. 24) was not uttered by Paul struggling and groaning in time past under the Law: How that Paul regarded himself, Phil. 3:4-6 says. Not that Paul utters this cry, but Paul the Christian, who puts it into the mouth of the Jew and thereby exposes the situation of the Jew who is not aware of it.<sup>69</sup>

Regarding the tense shifts from the past in 7:7-13 to the present in 7:14-25 this is easily explained. Paul first describes in the past tense the “event” which sin used the law to bring death. But when he then comes to describe the nature of the law, the nature of humanity, and the state of affairs that prevails for men and women under the law, the

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69. Ibid., 185.

70. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 226.

present tense comes naturally. The passage as a whole demonstrates the utter moral impotence of humanity under the law, a gloomy contrast to the glorious picture of redemption in Romans 6 and 8.<sup>70</sup> The passage's purpose and context of Romans 7 is clear: to demonstrate the relationship between sin and the law, as well as the consequences: "in the flesh," which demands salvation. With all of this in mind, Paul portrays himself in Romans 7 as a way of rhetorically narrating what happens to a man under the law.

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71. Ibid., 186.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE CONTEXT OF ROMANS SEVEN**

To explain the controversial statements in Romans seven, it is necessary to examine Romans six and eight. Romans seven flows directly from Romans six, and an immediate continuation and connection message from chapter seven to eight is clearly presented. Romans six revealed that those in Christ have died to sin and are no longer slaves to it. Romans seven begins by showing that, in Christ, we have also died to our obligation to follow the law of Moses. Paul makes clear, though, that the law is holy and good because it reveals to us just how sinful we are. Paul describes how his failed attempts to follow the law convinced him more fully of his need to be delivered from his sinfulness to be delivered by God through faith in Christ from his sinfulness. Romans 8 explores many of the benefits of being in Christ. Thus, in this chapter, I will discuss the connection between Romans six and eight and the contradictory statements between Romans seven and the preceding and following chapters.

### ***3.1 Paul's Argument in Romans Six and Eight***

#### ***3.1.1 The Identification of Statements Show a Clear Connection Between Romans 6 and 8***

A comprehensive analysis of the connection between Romans chapters 6 and 8 reveals the strong similarity of Paul's statements concerning the teaching on Christian freedom in Christ. To begin with, Paul emphasizes the believers' liberation from slavery in Romans six. Christians are no longer "slaves to sin" (Rom: 6: 17, 20). He tells

believers in this verse that they must not allow sin to "rule" in their bodies. For we have died to it.<sup>71</sup> Christians have been liberated from the first to belong to the second. The main theme of the rest of the passage is that of the rescue of the slaves: Verse 6 speaks of no longer being enslaved to sin, verse 9 of death no longer being one's master, vv. 12-14 of sin no longer reigning over one. The whole discussion of vv. 16-23 hangs on the notion of slavery recently abandoned and freedom newly found.<sup>72</sup> "To die to sin" meant, for the Messiah, that he died under its weight, but that in doing so he came out from its domain. And this happened, once and for all (6: 14). Sin, he says, will not have dominion over you. The reason is clear; you have transferred your abode and your status.<sup>73</sup> Our release from the power of sin takes place through our union with Christ. The baptized have died to all that.<sup>74</sup> The believer is no longer sin's slave; he is the slave of righteousness (6:15-23) and should obey it.<sup>75</sup> Robert Haldane appears to understand Paul in this way. He notes that,

To explain the expression "dead to sin" as meaning "dead to the influence and love of sin" is sin, but to a death to its guilt, that is to our justification. We know that our old self was crucified with Christ (6-7). We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that the body of sin might be done away. We are to consider the fact we are, namely dead to sin and alive to God (11), like Christ (10). Once, we grasp this, that our old life has ended, with the score settled, the debt paid and the law satisfied, we shall want to have nothing more to do with it. We are to recall, to ponder, to grasp, to register these truths until they are so integral to our mindset that a return to the old life is unthinkable. Regenerate Christians should no more contemplate a return to unregenerate living than adults to their childhood. For our union with Christ Jesus has severed us from the old life and committed us to the new. We have died, and we have risen. How possibly live again in what we have died to? <sup>76</sup>

Paul is presenting the impossibility of continuing in sin and a life dominated by sin. Death to sin is not something hoped for or resolved upon by the believer; it is

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72. Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 93.

73. N. T. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 161.

74. *Ibid.*, 171.

75. Morris, *The Epistle to Romans*, 245-247.

76. Ernest Best. *The Cambridge Bible Commentary: The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (London: The Cambridge University Press, 1967), 66, 69.

77. Robert Haldane, *Geneva Series of Commentary: Romans* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 179-180.

something that has already taken place. The explanation of our death to sin immediately continues. It has been accomplished by being “baptized into Christ.”<sup>77</sup> Charles Hodge make a great statement:

Paul shows in Romans 6:8-11, that as Christ's death on account of sin was for once, never to be repeated, and his life, a life devoted to God; so our separation from sin is final, and our life a life consecrated to God. Regeneration is not merely a change of acts, or of the affections in distinction from the understanding, but a change of the whole man. Thus, Paul said, to the believer who knows that the old man is crucified with Christ, the objections that gratuitous justification leads to licentiousness, is contradictory and absurd.<sup>78</sup>

Paul emphasizes obedience at this point because it forms a strong contrast to sin, which is disobedience to God. He can do this because he has been justified and emancipated from sin; standing thus in a new relationship to God and this obedience unto righteousness here is an inward righteousness, or holiness (6:22).<sup>79</sup> A similar content is found in Romans chapter 8. The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. Under the old order it was simply impossible to do the will of God, but those whose life is controlled by the Spirit, do the will of God from the heart.<sup>80</sup> For those who are united to Christ, the power of sin has been broken.<sup>81</sup> They are free from sin and death which result from it (8:2). Paul regards the Spirit of God as active only in believers, and thereby forming their outlook (8:5-6). They are sons of God, and they are only able to fight because the Spirit dwells in them (8:9). Each Christian life is being shaped and determined by God through God's Spirit. Because the Christian has entered the life lived on the level of the Spirit, he must seek to live always on that level (vv. 12-13).<sup>82</sup> The

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78. Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans Through Galatians*, Vol, 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 68.

79. Charles Hodge, *A commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 197.

80. Ernest Best, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary: The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (London: The Cambridge University Press, 1967), 72-73.

81. F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 157-159.

82. *Ibid.*, 176.

83. Best, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary: The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 88-89.

Spirit makes them sons, creating a new relationship with God. They are thus set free by the Spirit from slavery to sin (6:15-19), and the law (6:14) which they cannot obey (7:7-25).

Paul has now assured us that a man has entered a new life, become the member of a new humanity whose head and first member is Jesus; the splendor that belongs to the children of God (8:39).<sup>83</sup> Christ himself was righteous yet embraced Adamic flesh and death (8:3). He not only embodies death to the old way, but inaugurates a new way of righteousness and life for those united with him (5:18–19). Those who are in Christ are no longer in the sphere of Adam. They are “dead” to their former sin (6:5–7) and even to death (6:8–10), at least in a proleptic way that will affect their resurrection someday (6:5, 8; 8:23); Christ does not need to die again (6:9–10). Thus the *palaios anthrōpos*, the “old person” crucified with Christ (6:6), represents who humanity was in Adam. As Paul explained in 6:2–10, in Christ, believers died to the sin of Adamic humanity and have new life. If they believe this, they will “walk” (6:4) accordingly. They must be slaves who obey God and righteousness rather than sin (6:16–22). It is those under the law rather than those under grace who are prone to sin (6:14–15), which he will soon identify with lawlessness (6:19). No former slave of a bad master would want to return to that master; in the same way, no sensible person would want to return to a lifestyle the fruit of which was death (6:21).<sup>84</sup>

The Spirit is both the norm and the source and power of the Christian's new “walk” 8: 2-3. “Life” is a present reality in the Christian's openness for the future and in his being determined by it. For the person who used to be is crucified with Christ; his “soma of sin” (his sin-ruled self) is destroyed. The “world” for him no longer exists (Rom. 6:6; 7:4-6; Gal. 5:24; 6:14). He is a “new creation,” for “the old has passed away,

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84. Ibid., 94, 104.

85. Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary Series* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth, 2009), 99-100.

behold, the new has come” (II Cor. 5:17). Hence, the exhortation: “consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus . . . yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life” (Rom. 6:11, 13). Like “life,” so is “glory” a thing of the present, so that Paul can say of God in bold anticipation: “and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30). Hence, the believer's life can be described not only as a daily renewal of our inner nature (II Cor. 4:16) but also as a transformation “from glory to glory” (II Cor. 3:18).<sup>85</sup>

### ***3.1.2 The Opposite Identification of Statements Between Romans 7, and 8 in Paul’s Spiritual Condition.***

When we read these two chapters together, we find a contradiction of Pauline statements. That contrast is well stated in 8:2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” What Paul is describing in chapter 7 is what happens when someone tries to rely on the “law of sin and death.” Thus, the following pages will explain the reason Paul wants to show the readers how the Law should be assessed. His aim is to clearly illustrate the great difference between life under the law (7:7–25). Paul elaborates the situation described in 7:5: controlled by the sinful nature, with the law arousing sinful passions. Then, 8:1–30 depicts the status of the believer as one who serves “in the new way of the Spirit” (7:6).<sup>86</sup>

At the beginning of Romans 7:1-6 Paul indicates that the Jewish Christians are no longer bound to the law, but serve in the new reality of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code. The train of thought is continued in chapter 8 where God is praised for the freedom from sin which Jesus wants to give us (8:1-2). In verse 5 Paul reminds

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86. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 348-9.

87. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, 111.



the Jewish Christians of their experience during the time under the law.<sup>87</sup> In other words, for Paul the believers' release from the law means they may escape the dilemma of having their sinful passions "aroused by the law" (a dilemma which he expounds in Rom 7:7–25). In v. 6 he says that the believers release from the law enables them to live "the new life of the Spirit" (something he expounds in Rom 8:1–13). The implied contrast between the law and the Spirit is that under the law sin is aroused and so people are doomed to bear fruit to death, whereas under the reign of the Spirit they are free to bear fruit for God.<sup>88</sup>

In Romans 7: 7-13 Paul vindicates the law as being given by God.<sup>89</sup> Paul tells the story of Israel at Sinai in such a way as to echo the story of Adam in the garden. He describes the human being living "in the shadow of Adam." The "I" who encounters the commandment suffers the loss of innocence and falls into coveting, just as Adam did in the first transgression (vv. 8–9). The commandment that was given for life paradoxically brings death. It gives life to "sin" and sets loose sin's power to deceive (vv. 9–11).<sup>90</sup> The Torah arrived on Mount Sinai was a recapitulation of the primal sin of Adam. The law and the "commandment" are 'holy, upright and good' (7.12). It remained the apostle's settled conviction. That is the answer Paul gives to the next question, in verse 13: "Was it that good thing, then, that brought death to me?" Was Torah, however good it appears to be, really responsible for "my" death? The answer, in 7.14–20, is that the person who lives under Torah is, as a matter of objective theological reality (by no means necessarily of psychological self-awareness) constantly in two minds.<sup>91</sup> A comparison and contrast is found chapter 7: 17, where Paul speaks of "sin which dwells in" and in 7:18 he says that

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88. <https://www.christians.eu/understanding-romans-7/> Accessed on, February 22, 2022.

89. Stanley E. Porter, *Paul and His Theology* (Boston: Leiden Press, 2006), 119.

90. Doy Moyer 10/09/16 – Bulletin, *The Conflicted Man of Romans* <https://www.vestaviachurchofchrist.com/resources/articles/2016/10/09/the-conflicted-man-of-romans-7> accessed on February 22, 2022, 7:00 pm.

91. Terry L. Wilder, *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: Three Views of Romans 7* (Tennessee: Publishing Group, 2011), 69.

92. N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1172-3.

“nothing good dwells in me” with 8:9-11, where the Spirit and Christ are said to dwell in the child of God. These are difficult to reconcile as referring to the same person at the same time. Therefore, it is obvious that Paul is contrasting life under the law and the life led by the Spirit.<sup>92</sup>

In 8:1–15 Paul contrasts the new life in Christ with the best that law-informed flesh, could do in 7:7–25. As 7:7–25 reflected life under law in the flesh introduced in 7:5, so 8:1–17 reflects the new life of the Spirit introduced in 7:6. Paul paints this contrast graphically, in the terms standard in his culture: “Whereas the person in bondage to sin in 7:15–25 recognizes that the law is good and thus that the person stands justly condemned for sin, there is no condemnation in Christ (8:1). This lack of ‘condemnation’ recalls how condemnation belonged only to those in Adam, not to those in Christ (5:16, 18), for God took care of condemning sin in Christ in our stead (8:3). In Christ one is freed from the body of death (7:24), for one ruled by the life-giving Spirit rather than by the flesh (8:4–13) will be raised (8:2, 10–13).”<sup>93</sup> “After addressing the inadequacy of the law to make flesh righteous in 7:7–25, in 8:2 Paul shows how the law can be involved in making people righteous. The law of sin and death from which one is freed (8:2) refers to the law of sin working in one’s body (7:23, 25). This was Paul’s graphic way of saying that the law amplifies sin (7:8), and hence brings death (7:5). Merely having the law in the mind made one conscious of, but did not free one from, sin (7:16, 22–23). Liberation would come only by the law of the Spirit (8:2). Those who are in Christ share in his death and resurrection, and by the fruit of the indwelling Spirit fulfill the moral intention of the law (8:4; cf. 7:4; Gal 5:18, 22–23). The heart of the problem with the law (8:3) was what it was not designed to do: it righteously teaches right from wrong, but it does not transform

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93. Doy Moyer 10/09/16 – Bulletin, The Conflicted Man of Romans <https://www.vestaviachurchofchrist.com/resources/articles/2016/10/09/the-conflicted-man-of-romans-7> accessed on February 22, 2022, 7:00pm.

94. Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary: New Covenant Commentary Series*, 131.

a person to be righteous, to undo the power of sin Adam introduced into humanity. It was “weak” because it depended on “flesh” to fulfill it—and flesh could never fulfill God’s righteousness (see the excursus on “flesh” after 7:14–25). Only Christ by dying could introduce righteousness (see 5:17–19). By Jesus identifying with Adam, God destroyed sin in Jesus’s crucifixion, raising him as head of a new humanity, his body (see comment at 7:4; 12:5).<sup>94</sup>

Furthermore, what flesh could not accomplish, however, God did in Christ; the Spirit within believers would cause them to live out righteousness (8:4). In contrast to the law-informed mind defeated by the flesh in 7:22–23, Paul speaks here of a “frame of mind” (habitual way of thinking) guided by the Spirit (8:5–7). Paul speaks of a new perspective on reality informed by God’s Spirit active in one’s life rather than dependence or obsession with one’s own ways (8:5). For Paul, the mind-frame of the flesh produced death (8:6); that is, the mind dominated by bodily desires (7:23) stood under the body’s sentence of death (7:24). But the frame of mind dominated by the Spirit involves life and peace (8:6): both eternal life (5:21; 6:23) and peace with God (5:1) established through Christ. Paul would also know that the mind trusting in God has “peace” in the Hebrew version of Isa 26:3. “The fleshly mind was at enmity with God (8:7), i.e., not reconciled through Christ (5:10). The inability to submit to God’s law (8:7) has already been summarized in 7:16–23. The inability of the flesh to please God (8:8) challenged attempts to succeed by merely human works (cf. the conjunction of law, flesh and sin in 7:7–25); God is holy, and whatever works are not born from God’s own Spirit cannot satisfy his holiness. The apostle Paul emphasizes that all who belong to Christ have the Spirit dwelling in them, hence are “in the (sphere of the) Spirit” rather than “in the (sphere of the) flesh” (8:9). “In the flesh” here does not simply mean “in the body” (as in Gal 2:20), but walking according to the flesh (8:4–8, 12–13). All who are in Christ

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95. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary: New Covenant Commentary Series*, 132.

have the Spirit (the “Spirit of Christ”), hence they are able to live righteously (8:2–4, 13–14).” “Those who follow the way of flesh will perish, as flesh does; by living like the old way of flesh has been crucified with Christ. However, believers have confidence that they will be raised (8:12–13; cf. 6:2–11; Gal 6:8). To be “led” by God’s Spirit (8:14) means at least partly to have the Spirit-inspired perspective that produces righteousness and life (8:4–6). Undoubtedly, God’s Spirit speaks to one, assuring one of one’s relationship to God (8:15–16). The Spirit is associated with believers as God’s children in the future, because the Spirit will raise their bodies (8:10–11), hence revealing them as God’s children (8:19–23, especially 23). But the Spirit provides believers a foretaste of that destiny (8:23), confirming their state as God’s children in the present.<sup>95</sup>

As a result, I’ll summarize this point with Conzelmann’s comment about the three chapters’ relationship. On the premise of baptism, Romans 6 dealt with freedom from sins. It is freedom from sin and it therefore service of a new kind. Romans 7:1–6 grounds the reality of freedom in a juristic argument once again presents the results in the “once: now” pattern, in vv. 5f. Verses 7–25 then comment on v.5, and chapter 8 comments on v. 6. Thus the theme of Romans 7 is the unredeemed man, that of chapter 6 and 8 the redeemed man.<sup>96</sup>

### ***3.1.3 The Identification of Statements that Show a "Then and Now" Perspective in Romans 6–8 as Paul Develops his Argument***

At a glimpse, these three chapters could make the readers confused in grasping what Paul is addressing here. One reason is chapter six describes a believer under grace who has been delivered from the body of sin. Then, the next chapter presents a man under law. Finally, chapter 8 describes a liberated person. Hence, I will continue to argue that

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96. Ibid., 114–5.

97. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology*, 229.

person's life position under the control of law brought forth fruit to sin but when under grace, they bring fruit unto righteousness in Romans six to eight.

Paul contrasts the "old self" and the "new self," which are quite contrary to each other. The old nature is that which is dominated by sin or the flesh, the new nature is that which is dominated by the Spirit, that the believer is given at conversion. He paints out how Adam introduced our old man, which leads humanity to death. However, the "old person" is crucified with Christ (6:6),<sup>97</sup> so that we can "walk" (*peripateō*) in newness of life by the Spirit (8:4; Gal 5:16). God's Spirit provides the "newness" here that the law could not provide (7:6), and this new identity and role in Christ contrasts with the old person in Adam (6:6). So now they share the likeness (*homoioōma*) of Jesus's death and will also share his resurrection (Rom 6:5).<sup>98</sup>

Paul portrays those who are in Adam as obedient slaves of sin, which pays a wage of death and results in eternal separation from God and the conflicted self of unredeemed humanity from the point of view of someone who has been redeemed (7:13-24). This is his most detailed analysis of the human condition apart from Christ.<sup>99</sup> The condition of unredeemed humanity is in terms of alienation and slavery: alienation from God, and slavery to sin, and death. It was a time of "under the law."<sup>100</sup> Man is enslaved to it (Rom. 6:6, 17ff.), sold under it (Rom. 7:14); or man places himself at its disposal (Rom. 6:13) and it pays him wages (Rom. 6:23). The Torah rouses desire in man and deceives and kills him (Rom. 7:8, 11, 13). The sin "dwells" and acts in man (Rom. 7:17,20).<sup>101</sup> The "sting" of death is sin, whose power lies in the Torah, which is occasioned by sin, draws

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98. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary*, 98.

99. *Ibid.*, 99.

100. Frank J. Matera, *God's Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 89-90.

101. *Ibid.*, 98.

102. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Vol. I*, 245.

death and brings death with it. (Rom. 6:16, 23). The natural and transitory sin leads with inner necessity to death: "If you live according to the flesh you will die" (Rom. 8:13).<sup>102</sup>

Thus, death grows out of fleshly life like a fruit: organically, as it were: "While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death" (Rom. 7:5). Death is the "end" of the "fruit" of sinful life (Rom. 6:21). The soma of flesh in which sin "dwells" is thereby a "soma of death" (Rom. 7:24; 17).<sup>103</sup> Then Paul develops his view that our death to the law takes place for a specific purpose, in order that we might "serve in the new life of the Spirit."<sup>104</sup> In Romans 8:6, Paul writes, to be carnally minded is death. So it is obvious to conclude that Paul is reflecting on his experience under law, convicted, but not converted; still dead in his trespasses and sins. Finally, in verse 24, Paul cries out in utter desperation, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Paul has been pondering his woeful condition under the law. Then he finds that in the Lord Jesus Christ there is freedom from this body of death. Romans 6:6-7 says, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with (Christ), that the body of sin might be destroyed, that hence-forth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.<sup>105</sup>

Furthermore, whoever have been baptized into Christ (6:3-4) share his sonship, hence his "inheritance" (8:17). It was the power of sin (admittedly using the law as an unwilling ally) that caused the "I" of Rom 7:7-25 so much anguish. It is through justification and the reception of the Spirit that believers are delivered from sin's dominion (Rom. 6:6; 7:6). Paul's clear statement to his readers is "in the Spirit," no longer "in the flesh." Paul can say: "when we were in the flesh ...," (Rom. 7:5) and: "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9).<sup>106</sup> The evidence for this is that the Spirit

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103. Ibid., 246.

104. Ibid., 248.

105. Morris, *The Epistle to Romans*, 291.

106. Moo, *Epistle to Romans*, 450, 451.

107. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Vol. I*, 252.

of God dwells in them. Romans 8:11 thus gives the complete answer to the question of 7:24, the answer anticipated in 7:25a.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, this verse looks back to 5:21, where “grace” is obviously a periphrasis for “God” (cf. 6:23), and points toward our salvation and life in the Spirit (Rom. 8: 1-11, 17, 29-30).<sup>108</sup> The contrast between the old and new life in these three chapters is complex. Thus, I am citing from Keener’s table on the contrast between life in the flesh and in the Spirit:

| <b>Life under the old man (Adam)</b>   | <b>Life under new man (Christ)</b>  |
|--|---|
| Law, sin, and death (6: 14-16; 7:7-13)   | Freed from law (7:4, 6; 8:2), sin (6:18, 20, 22) and death (5:21; 6:23; 8:2)  |
| Oldness of the letter (old humanity 6:6; 7:6)                                      | Newness of the Spirit (7:6’ cf. newness of life, 6: 4; 8:2)   |
| I am fleshy (7:14)   | You are not in the (sphere of) flesh, if Christ lives in you (8:9); no longer in the flesh (7:5)  |
| I am sold under (as a slave to) sin (6:17; 7:14; cf. 7:23)                         | Believers have been freed from enslavement to sin (6:18, 20, 22); they are “redeemed” (3:24)  |
| Knowing right (in the law) without the ability to do right (7:15–23)               | Power to live righteously (8:4), not conferred by external law (8:3); contrast 2:17–24  |
| Sin dwells in (and rules) me (7:17, 20)  | The Spirit dwells in believers (8:9, 11)  |
| Nothing good dwells in me (i.e., in me as flesh; 7:18)                             | The Spirit dwells in believers (8:9, 11)  |
| The law of sin dominates his bodily members (6:19; 7:23)                           | Believers are freed from the law of sin (8:2)   |
| Sin wins the war and captures “me” as a prisoner (7:23)                            | (Believers should win the spiritual war, cf. 2 Cor 10:3-5).   |
| “I want freedom from this “body of death” (body destined for death; 6:22-23; 7:24) | Believers who do not live for their own bodily desires (8:10–13) are freed from the way of death (8:2), in contrast to those who follow the flesh (8:6, 13) |
| A slave to the law of sin in his flesh, vs. his mind (7:25)                        | Believers are freed from the law of sin (8:2; cf. 6:18, 20, 22); the mental perspective either belongs to the Spirit or the flesh (8:5–9),                  |

108. N. T. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans*, 220.

109. Wilder, *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: Three Views of Romans* 7, 50.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| “I want freedom from this “body of death” (body destined for death; 7:24) | Believers who do not live for their own bodily desires (8:10–13) are freed from the way of death (8:2), in contrast to those who follow the flesh (8:6, 13)   |
| A slave to the law of sin in his flesh, vs. his mind (7:25)               | Believers are freed from the law of sin (8:2; cf. 6:18, 20, 22); the mental perspective either belongs to the Spirit or the flesh (8:5–9)“Paul’s application of the language in this context, however, shockingly applies to a pious Jew trying to observe God’s law.” <sup>109</sup> |

Therefore, I would like to sum up with Westerholm, quoting Kummel’s statement on these three chapters, which clearly state that all these contrast indicate that chapter 8 returns to the perspective of chapter 6. In both chapters’ deliverance from the power of sin and death is described and made the basis for an appeal to let that victory have consequences in Christian living. Chapter 7:7-25 is crucial to Paul’s argument, explaining the nature of the relationship between sin, the law, and the flesh that is otherwise presupposed in 6:14, 7:4-6, and 8:3. Nonetheless, in the context between Romans 6 and 8. Romans 7 is a parenthesis. It must at least be conceded that the lot of hopeless bondage to sin described in 7:14-25 is far different from the description in chapters 6 and 8 of the practical lives of Christians, over whom “sin will not rule,” since they are “not under law but under grace” (6:14; cf. 6:2-4, 6, 17-18, 22; 8:4, 13).<sup>110</sup>

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110. Keener, *Romans*, 123-124.

111. Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 179.



## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

#### *4.1. Review of Chapter 6*

When we reviewed Chapter six, we can see how the apostle Paul addressed some of the most important issues for Christians. He opts for a question-and-answer format to emphasize his argument (6:1-3, 15-16, 21). His initial query was in response to the idea of God's grace for our salvation, as well as the counter-argument that the more we sin, the more grace we receive. He makes it plain that the grace that frees us from sin does not return us to the slavery from which we were freed. Becoming a believer is a significant step; it marks the start of faith and the end of sin.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, the position of a person in their prior way of life and now in their new way of life is contrasted. He begins by asking one of his detractors a crucial question: can a person persist on sinning if he is only saved by grace, and the more he sins, the more grace will abound? His instant reaction to this idea is unequivocal. Certainly not! In Christ, a man is rescued from the power of sin and given his freedom. Sin no longer has authority over a man who has died to sin via unity with Christ and is thus freed from it. He makes these points: (1) Baptism brings us into contact with Christ's death (vv. 3–4); (2) because we share in Christ's death, we also share in his resurrection (vv. 5, 8–10); and (3) participation in Christ's death entails liberation from sin (vv. 6–7).<sup>2</sup> As a result, remaining in sin after a believer

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112. Morris, *The Epistle to Romans*, 245.

113. Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 93, 94.

has come to faith is a moral contradiction. In Romans 6: 2, Paul expresses his strong opposition to believers continuing to sin. Because believers have died to sin, they can no longer sin. By expressing Christian baptism with Christ, Paul builds on his understanding of dying to sin: Christian death with Christ brings death to an entire way of life (6:3-9).<sup>3</sup>

Paul goes on to discuss the good option of turning away from sin and giving oneself to God (Rom 6: 13b). He wants believers to understand that they were once dead to sin but are now alive to God (6:11). The believer, according to Paul, begins a new life. When God forgives a man's sin, He also frees him from its power, allowing him to live a life free of sin. They must no longer see themselves as being under the influence of death (6:12), but rather as being raised from the grave (6:13).<sup>4</sup> The Christian is no longer a slave to sin; instead, he is a slave to righteousness (6:15-23). As a result, it is self-evident that continuing to sin is impossible. Paul is emphasizing the impossibility of sinning and living a life dominated by sin. The explanation of our death to sin continues soon after we are "baptized into Christ."<sup>5</sup>

Paul goes on to say that a man may only serve one of two masters: sin or righteousness. He describes the new life as a slavery-slavery to righteousness and being "enslaved to God" in 6:18. (6:22). At this point, Paul highlights obedience as a striking contrast against sin, which is disobedience to God. Because he has become a servant of righteousness, the believer is able to offer the obedience that God desires. This is a holiness or righteousness that comes from inside. His main point is that a believer cannot serve sin indefinitely. Slavery to sin was a man's previous way of life before he came to Christ. But now he may show himself as obedient from the heart; his obedience is genuine and by choice. In summary, sin's power has been broken, and believers can

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114. F. F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 135-136.

115. Keener, *Romans*, 99-100.

116. Robert Haldane, *Geneva Series of Commentary: Romans* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 179-180.

freely renounce their enslavement to sin and surrender to God. This righteousness involves deliverance, holiness, and whole internal conformity to God's divine image.<sup>6</sup>

#### ***4.2. The Place and Purpose of Romans Seven in its Present Context***

##### ***4.2.1 The Importance of the Specific Address to the Audience in 7:1***

Romans 7 begins this context with a specific application to Jewish believers who had been under the law. It starts with the words "Ἡ ἀγνοεῖτε, or "do you not know, brothers (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law lords over a person insofar as he lives?" (7:1). And the phrase γινώσκουσιν γὰρ νόμον λαλῶ, "for I am speaking to is those who know the law)" is a signal that a different section begins here. The issue or matter of the law comes to the forefront in this chapter, especially the relationship between the law and sin. The word νόμος (*nomos*, law) here does not refer to law in general or to the Roman law, but to the law of Moses.<sup>7</sup> To counter this viewpoint, we have already seen that the Mosaic law is discussed in Romans 2–5. Mosaic law is the law that produces sin (5:20), yet Mosaic law is also the law that believers are no longer subject to (6:14–15). Furthermore, the subsequent context implies that the Mosaic law is in focus, since Paul specifically quotes the tenth commandment of the Decalogue (7:7), and he affirms the sanctity of the law and the goodness of God's instructions (7:12). Paul mentions the Old Testament more than any other letter in Romans, implying that the readers are familiar with the Mosaic law's contents.<sup>8</sup> Paul seeks to illustrate some key facts regarding the law in verses 1–6, by which he refers to the law of Moses, which was

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117. Ernest Best, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary: The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (London: The Cambridge University Press, 1967), 72–73.

118. Douglas J. Moo, *the Epistles to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 421.

119. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 472.

delivered to the Israelites on Mount Sinai.<sup>9</sup> The converts to Judaism thought that they were rescued by God's gracious choice rather than by strict observance of the rules. Nonetheless, as part of their culture, many people attempted to observe the commandments as best they could. As a result, Paul addresses another key topic concerning the law to the Jewish community who had grown up in it.<sup>10</sup> According to Keck, Paul draws emphasis to the readers' knowledge of the law, and Paul informs them that he views the law to be a power that, like sin and death, "lords it over" a person, reminding them that they are "under the law."<sup>11</sup>

Paul is addressing Romans 7 to the Jewish segment in the Roman Church, (men who know the law v. 1), who are still feeling obligated to all the restrictions of their previous understanding of salvation. For the Jews, the law was the greatest good given by God. They studied it with the greatest diligence, regarding even the minutest detail as important. They took it as central for any person as he sought to live a life of service to God. The law was a good gift of God and, rightly used, was of great importance. Thus, Paul gives serious attention to the place of the law. For Paul started with the section, "do you not know" the construction which implies the readers know this and will go along with the argument as it is developed.<sup>12</sup>

As a result, when Paul writes his epistle, he distinguishes between Gentile and Jewish Christians in Rome. In some passages, there are hints that the audience is Gentile-Christian (1:5–6; cf. also 1:13 and 15:14–21). He expresses the desire to "get some fruit among the Romans, just as (I have) among the other Gentile peoples" in 1:13 and similarly in 15:15 ff. In 11:13, he writes, "To you Gentiles I speak," addressing the

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120. N. T. Wright, *Romans: For Everyone Bible Study Guides* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 43.

121. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 735.

122. Leander E. Keck, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 175.

123. Morris, *The Epistle to Romans*, 269-270.

readers as Gentiles, as opposed to the unbelieving Jews. Paul also speaks to non-Jews about his own people in 9:3 ff; 10:1 f; 11:23, 28, 31, 32.<sup>13</sup> However, there are also indicators that Paul was writing to a Jewish Christian audience: He greets Jewish Christians (16:3, 7, 11); in chapter 2:7, he addresses himself to a Jew; he associates his readers with the Mosaic law: they are “not under law” (6:14, 15) because they have “died to the law” (7:4); and note 7:1: “I am speaking to those who know the law”; much of the letter is devoted to issues that would be of particular interest to Jewish Christians: the Jewish sin, for example, the pride of the Jews about their law, but their failure to keep it (2:1–3).<sup>14</sup>

It is evident that Roman 7 can only refer to Paul's debate with Jewish arguments (cf. 2:17; 3:1; 4:1; 7:1, 4). From this point of view, an attempt must be made to form a picture of the Roman readers. Even 4:1 and 7:1ff don't stand in the way of that purpose, because in 4:1 Paul engages in a dispute with a Jewish opponent and identifies himself as a Jew. In 7:1, he refers to his readers as “lawyers,” because Paul is referring to the Law of Moses. As a result, we can conclude that when Paul says, “I speak to those who know the law,” he is addressing a certain group inside the Roman church rather than the entire church. Paul addresses the Jews in the Church in 2:3, 2-17, and the entire second chapter, then he addresses the Gentiles in 11:13-31. He does not always address the entire congregation. So when he says in 7:1 that “I speak to those who know the law,” he is referring to Jews who know the law better than Gentiles.<sup>15</sup>

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124. Werner Georg Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, translated by Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 309.

125. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 396-97.

126. Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 309-10.

#### ***4.2.2 The Connections of 7:1-6 with Chapters 6 and 8: Made to Die to the Law***

When Paul addresses his readers in Romans 7:1-6, he employs two closely related illustrations to explore this transference of subjection: first, slavery (6:15, 22,) and, second, marriage (7:1-6). Amid the disparity that Paul portrays between the old life (slavery to sin and death or the first marriage) and the new life (slavery to righteousness and Christ or the second marriage). The task before Paul lies in convincing his readers that they have been freed from “the law of sin and of death” in order to become subject to the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:2).<sup>16</sup> Referring back to chapter 6, we are buried with Christ and our old way of life passes away completely. Our death to sin and our baptism into his death are followed by our being raised to new life (Rom 6:3-4). Here in 7:1 nonetheless, rather than death (6:9) or sin (6:14), it is the law that “lords over” (κυριεύει), in this case, a living person.<sup>17</sup> Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.<sup>18</sup>

Paul in Romans 6, uses the examples of baptism and slavery. His topic wasn’t either baptism or slavery. Rather, it was the question of whether Christians under grace should continue to sin. But he used baptism and slavery to illustrate his answer, which was “Absolutely not!” In Romans 7, Paul moves to a new topic: the law. Paul said in Romans 6:11 that as Christians, we have died to sin and, rise to new life. This fact is now to be “reckoned” as true of all those who are baptized into him. Paul can use the language

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127. As Joyce A. Little rightly notes, Paul’s intention here is “to establish a ‘before’ and ‘after’ illustration of the function of the law in our lives. Paul does not intend here to define what that function is, but only to establish the fact that a relationship does exist between the way in which law was to be understood before Christ and the way it is to be understood now” [“Paul’s Use of Analogy: A Structural Analysis of Romans 7:1-6”, *CBQ* 46 (1984): 84.

128. Though Peter J. Tomson intriguingly argues that Paul is referring to an “apostolic law”, given the similarities between Rom 7:2 and 1Cor 7:39-40 [“What Did Paul Mean by ‘Those Who Know the Law’? (Rom 7.1)”, *NTS* 49 (2003): 573-581], I am assuming, with most commentators, that by “law” Paul is speaking, generally, of the Torah (see, e.g., Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 359).

129. <https://www.gospeltruth.net/walkinthepirit/witsrom7.htm>, The Gospel Truth: Walking in the Spirit A Liberating Commentary on Romans 6, 7 and 8 by George E. (Jed) Smock (Romans 7: Sold Under Sin, 4, 25, 22, accessed on April 4, 2022, 9:00 pm.

of "unrighteousness" and "righteousness"(Rom 6:13).<sup>19</sup> Now he adds that we have died to the law.<sup>20</sup> One striking thing Paul says about the law is that people need to be freed from its demands so that they might walk in the Spirit and bear fruit for God. The most important text in this regard is Rom 7:4–6. This section foreshadows what will be argued in more detail in Rom 7:7–8:13. In particular, Rom 7:5 foreshadows Rom 7:7–25 where life in the flesh and under the law is depicted, and Rom 7:6 foreshadows Rom 8:1–13 where freedom and service in “the new life of the Spirit” is explained. The fulfilment of the law in believers is achieved by walking according to the Spirit. By Spirit they put to death the deeds of the flesh (Rom 8:13). Thus the real contrast between the law and the Spirit in Rom 8:3–4 is that while the requirement of the law is just, the law was powerless to bring about the fulfilment of that just requirement in sinful human beings. However, God brings about this fulfilment in the lives of those who walk according to the Spirit.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, it is absolutely vital to realize that Paul thinks in terms of two and only two groups: those who are “under law” (“in the flesh”) and those who are “under grace” (“in the Spirit”). The characteristics of these two groups are summarized both before (7:5-6) and after (8:1-4). This means that in v.14-25, Paul is not describing a “carnal Christian” who has not yet “passed into Romans 8,” as the “deeper life” view of Romans 7 would tell us. All Christians are “in” Romans 8, just as all Christians are “in” Romans 6 and “in” Romans 7:6. There is no plausible way that the wretched-slave existence described in chapter 7 can be simultaneously experienced with the victory and freedom described in Romans 6 and 8. Paul has already shown that through Christ Jesus human beings have been freed from sin, self, and death; now he wants to show how that freedom also liberates from law.<sup>22</sup>

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130. N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 231.

131. John C. Brunt, *Redemption in Romans* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific, 2010), 36-37.

132. Stanley E. Porter, *Paul and His Theology* (Boston: Leiden, 2006), 117, 126.

133. Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *the Anchor Bible: Romans* (New York: Doubleday Dell, 1992), 460.

Christians who have died "through the body of Christ" are no longer bound to observe the law. Christians are like the Jewish wife whose husband has died. As she is freed from "the law of the husband" through death, so Christians have died "through the body of Christ" and they are freed from the law (7:2, 3, 4b). Paul takes up this notion again in 8:1-2. We serve God in a new way of the Spirit: "that we might serve in a newness of spirit." "God" is supplied as the object of "serve." The "Spirit" of new life is received in baptism (6:4); and it is more fully explained in chap. 8. This sense is also suggested by the contrast with *sarx*, "flesh" in 7:5. And not in the old way of a written code. Thus "Spirit" is contrasted not only with "flesh" (v 5), but also with the "letter" of the old law. We serve not a written code, but with the new dynamic principle of the Spirit.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, the law had a negative impact in the era before Christ's death and our baptism.<sup>24</sup> God has done what the Torah, weakened by the flesh, could not do: that is, God has accomplished the goals for which the covenant was put in place.<sup>25</sup> In Rom 6: 21-22, Paul contrasts the present state with the past. When they had been slaves to sin, now they have been enslaved to God. Now Christ has freed us from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:1-2). Therefore, sin can no longer dictate terms to us (6:1-14). God is now our master, which our lives must reflect (6:15-23). Likewise, the law, which, because of sin, made the situation of people worse instead of better, no longer holds sway over the believer (7:1-25). The same Spirit who inspired justifying faith is at work in believers to do "what the law could not do" (8.3), to complete, in other words, the renewal of the

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134. Ibid., 460.

135. Athanasios Despotis, 2017. P. 256. "https://www.academia.edu/39827024/\_The\_Law\_and\_the\_New\_Life\_in\_Romans\_7\_1\_6\_Eastern\_Western\_Dialogue\_and\_Romans\_in\_Participation\_Justification\_and\_Conversion\_Eastern\_Orthodox\_Interpretation\_of\_Paul\_and\_the\_Debate\_between\_Old\_and\_New\_Perspectives\_on\_Paul\_WUNT\_442\_ed\_Athanasios\_Despotis\_T% C3% BCbingen\_Mohr\_Siebeck\_2017\_247\_76, accessed on March 15, 2022, 7:00pm.

136. N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 31.



covenant. He will give life in place of death, holiness in place of sin (8:12–13).<sup>26</sup> Through the agency of God's Spirit, the Christian is assured of final victory over death and the power of the flesh (8:1–13). That same Spirit, making us God's children (8:14–17), provides additional assurance that the work God has begun in us will be brought to a triumphant conclusion: justification will assuredly lead to glorification (8:18–39).<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, I would like to conclude with Kummel's statement on the connection between these three chapters. The new life is basically freed from sin on the basis of baptism (6: 1-4); it is obedience and service (6:15-23); it is freedom from the law (7:1-6), which effects only sin and death in men who are under it (the law), but which no longer has power, thanks to the saving act of Christ (7: 25). Whoever is ruled by the Spirit is free from sin and death (8:1-11). Possession of the Spirit guarantees certainty of redemption (8:12-17). In this way, the hope of eternal salvation is certainty guaranteed (8: 18-30), for which Paul offers joyous thanks (8: 31-39).<sup>28</sup>

#### ***4.2.3 The "I" Section and the Progression to Spiritual Impotence and Death***

The condition of the "I" described in Romans 7:14-25 is of a person who wants to do what is good, but finds he or she is unable to. This person does not justify their sins, but suffers under the burden of their inability to do what is good. Thus, Romans 7 is frequently interpreted as referring to the inner struggle of a Christian. Wright states that "Paul dramatizes the encounter in a first-person narrative, drawing its substance from a variety of biblical narratives (that telling of Adam and Eve's disobedience in particular, as well as others relating Israel's experience under the Sinaitic law). Adamic humanity does not, and - in its present state of corruption - cannot, do good. That impotence is

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137. N. T. Wright, *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul 1978–2013* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 54.

138. Garson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 393.

139. Kummel, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 307.

depicted in 7:14-25.”<sup>29</sup> In order to exonerate the Torah, Paul now analyzes further the “I” that is caught up in sin and hence in death. To do this, he contrasts the true nature of Torah with the nature of human beings (and the Jew precisely as a person “in Adam”).<sup>30</sup> It is clear that Paul is concerned to demonstrate that his contrast between the era of the law and that of the Spirit does not call into question the goodness of God’s law. Paul achieves this in 7:7–25 by describing a battle with sin in the life of sinner.<sup>31</sup> Paul’s contrasts between his mind or reason - knowing what was right with his members in which passions or the evil impulse worked. The language of moral helplessness here resembles some tragic depictions of passion overpowering reason. In 7:24, “Wretched person that I am!” was a standard cry of despair, mourning or self-reproach; it often appears in tragic laments. Paul summarizes 7:7-24 here: the dual allegiance of the person trying to achieve righteousness only by human effort, without becoming a new creation in Christ.<sup>32</sup>

Paul introduces the three major subsections (vv. 14-17, 18-20, and 21-25) in the passage. In verses 14 and 18 Paul makes a confessional statement in which the “I” recognizes its impotence: “we know (οἶδαμεν,) the law is spiritual” (v.14) and “I know (οἶδα,) that nothing good dwells in me” (v18).<sup>33</sup> Chapter 7: 21 draws the conclusion from verses 14-20: “Therefore I find [εὕρισκω,] with reference to the law, in me the one wanting to do good, that evil is present in me” and accepts the verdict that the “I” lacks the ability to carry out God’s law. The structure of this section clearly portrays as: life under the law; unregenerate experience described (7:5), life under the law elaborated (7:7-25) 4), and life in the Spirit elaborated (8:1-17). Thus the simplest way of

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140. N. T. Wright, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 466.

141. N. T. Wright, N. T. *NIB Commentary on Romans*, 199.

142. Terry L. Wilder, *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: Three Views of Romans 7* (Nashville: B and H, 2011), 41.

143. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 737.

144. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 372.

understanding the structure is that Paul is describing the experience of unbelievers in verses 14-25, for 7:7-25 elaborates on 7:5, which clearly portrays unregenerate experience.<sup>34</sup>

Paul argued here that sin as an occupying power in our humanity (flesh) is more decisive than our willingness to obey (vv 12, 17, 20, 23). It has often been pointed out that the structure of verses 18-20 matches verses 14-17. The bondage of the “I” in the flesh is found in the initial confessional statements of both verse 14b and verse 18a. The first-person pronoun “I” (ἐγώ) is expressed in very brief and antithetical fashion: “But I am fleshly” (ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι). Paul’s earlier use in 1 Cor 3:1-3 of the plural substantial adjective σαρκίνοις (“those who are fleshly,” i.e., “those controlled by the sinful nature”), together with its roughly synonymous cognate σαρκικοί (“those who are fleshly,” i.e., “those who belong only to the order of earthly things”) as well as his use in Rom 7:5 of the expression ἐν τῇ σαρκί (“in the flesh,” i.e., “controlled by the sinful nature”) suggests that Paul here in 7:14, by the use of the personal pronoun ἐγώ coupled with the substantial adjective σάρκινος, is not speaking simply of the material composition of human beings, but rather of the control of all people by their inherited sinful nature. What stands out with the “I” is the evil of sin that he inherited and the desire of the “I.” It cannot keep the law. Thus the “I” is captive to the power of sin. This slavery is demonstrated by the inability of the “I” to do the good that it desires (15b, 18b, and 19).<sup>35</sup>

Some argue that Paul shifts in verse 14-25 to present tense verbs to depict his spiritual condition, which is captivity to the power of sin. The shifts of the present tense have often described Christian experience. But the passage does not mean we should intend to adjudicate between Christian and pre-Christian experience by this shifting the

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145. Ibid., 373.

146. Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 829.

tense. In other words, the present tense is used because his nature or state under the law is unfolded. The state of the person who is a slave to sin is communicated most effectively through present tense verb. Rather our duty as a reader is to comprehend the intended meaning of the “I” in these verses. Paul clearly explains in Rom 7:13-25 the continuing state of bondage under sin. This cannot be reconciled with the freedom a person received in Rom 6 and Rom 7:1-6. Moo gives a great summary on Rom 7:14-25 as the “I,” an unregenerate person by identifying the following:

1. The strong connection of *egō* with “the flesh” (vv. 14, 18, and 25) suggests that Paul is elaborating on the unregenerated condition mentioned in 7:5: being “in the flesh.”
2. *Egō* throughout this passage struggles “on his/her own” (cf. “I myself” in v.25), without the aid of the Holy Spirit.
3. *Egō* is “under the power of sin” (v. 14b), a state from which every believer is released (6:2, 6, 11, 18-22).
4. As the unsuccessful struggle of vv. 15-20 shows, *egō* is a “prisoner of the law of sin” (v.23). Yet Rom 8:2 proclaims that believers have been set free from this same “law of sin (and death).”
5. What Paul depicted in 7:14-25 is not just a struggle with sin but a defeat by sin.
6. The *egō* in these verses struggles with the need to obey the Mosaic law; yet Paul has already proclaimed the release of the believer from the dictates of the law (6:14; 7:4-6).

Thus, these arguments describe the struggle of the person outside Christ to do “what is good.” The power of God alone is able to break the power of sin. Deliverance from this situation comes with the converting and regenerating work of God in Christ, who transfers the unable and defeated person from the realm of “sin and death” to the realm of “the Spirit of life” (v. 24b; 8:2).<sup>36</sup>

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147. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 445.

#### ***4.2.4 The Nature of the Spiritual of Deliverance in 7:25***

The apostle Paul's declaration in Rom 7:25 describing his deliverance from the body of sin and death is so striking that it stands out. It's a joyful confession from a hopeless man who sees no way out of his enslavement and slavery. This final affirmation returns us to Paul's portrayal in 7:14-24, when he was discussing the "I" and his enslavement. This paragraph, according to some, describes Paul's maturation as a Christian. Furthermore, others interpret the present tense literally, claiming that this is the tribulation that Christians face even throughout their new life in Christ. John MacArthur, a well-known evangelical, represents this point of view, saying, "A Christian is no more holy or blameless in himself, that is, in his fleshly essence, than he was before salvation."<sup>37</sup> This remark alludes to a flimsy gospel that forgives but does not transform a person. According to the opposite viewpoint, these words do not describe the Christian experience at all, but rather Paul's struggle to serve God under the law while yet being convicted of his faults. In this view, Luther sums up his salvation philosophy by saying that we are "both sinner and saint, continually repenting." In our own eyes and everyday experiences, we are sinners; in God's eyes, we are saints because of our passionate faith in the Cross.<sup>38</sup> If that's the case, Paul is contradicting what he just said in chapters 6 and 7:1-6 about Christians' deliverance.

A problem with the section in chapter 7 is that the "I" is carnal. "I am fleshly, sold under sin," he says in verse 14b. It's no surprise, then, that he describes his situation and prays for help: "I am a wretched individual!"<sup>39</sup> This is a plea for help in the face of spiritual despair and judgment. Paul has been demonstrating how the "I" has been dragged into condemnation by the reigning power of sin, despite the law. The "I's"

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148. John C. MacArthur, *the MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 1-8* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 383.

149. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1954), 113.150.

151. Fitzmeyer, Joseph A. *The Anchor Bible: Romans* (New York: Doubleday Dell, 1992), 472-73.

language and voice are required for salvation from sin and death. Paul understands humanity's terrible status and admits that only "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (7:25) can this situation be redeemed by divine grace.<sup>40</sup> He recounts the Ego's moral experience when confronted with Moses' law, in which he discovers that the force of sin is too strong for him to comply with the law's demands. Paul has been demonstrating how the dominating power of sin has led ego into condemnation, both via and against the law. The state from which rescue is sought in the personal plea that brings the narrative of vv. 7-23 to a close can only be the condition Paul has presented in these verses: the status of the person under a spiritual death sentence, condemned, and headed for hell. "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord," Paul responds promptly to the petition of v. 24b " (v.25).<sup>41</sup>

Some from the Wesleyan tradition, however, were influenced by their idea of salvation. They portray Paul as a new convert who has received pardon from sin but has yet to receive complete sanctification: the deeper work of the Holy Spirit that eliminates sin's power. The carnal and split believer, "unstable in all he undertakes," is described in this verse on the "I."<sup>42</sup> These statements contradict Paul's train of reasoning and the order of redemption that he lays forth in these chapters. The control of sin and the law are broken, according to Paul, when Christians die with Christ in baptismal witness to their newfound faith. It would be inconsistent to link this verse with a post-conversion struggle with temptation and past patterns of sin for the convert, Paul. The persisting character of the old self, which has not yet been regenerated by grace, renders obedience to the law impossible. A slave to two masters: The Spirit-awakened mind on the one hand, and the sin-controlling human nature on the other.<sup>43</sup>

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152. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 464.

153. Ibid., 464-6.

154. George Lyons and William M. Greathouse, *Romans 1-8; A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Kansas, MO: Beacon Hill, 2008), 222.

155. Bence, *Romans*, 132.

The power of sin was the source of so much sorrow for the "I" of Rom 7:7–25. Believers are released from the dominion of sin by (justification and) the reception of the Spirit. The law of the Spirit and life, as opposed to the law of sin and death, as viewed in this way, help us comprehend Paul's thoughts on the relationship between the Mosaic law and the Spirit of God after Christ's arrival.<sup>44</sup> We are reminded of our past failures to do God's will, and our lives under Moses' law. The law was unable to liberate us from the power of sins and drove us deeper into frustration inside ourselves. But now we have now been set free by Jesus Christ, our Lord.<sup>45</sup>

### **4.3. *The Transition in 8:1-2***

Chapter eight of Romans, resolves the issues raised in chapter 7 and solves humanity's overriding problem: sin. This transition word "Therefore" is a weighty one; it sums up the first seven chapters and means: "Because of *Yeshua* is and everything he has done in history on behalf of sinners." There is no longer any condemnation from the Torah.<sup>46</sup> This pronouncement in 8:1 of "no condemnation" is set in the immediate context and transition from Paul's statements about "sin, God's commandment that put him to death" in 7:7-13; his inability to be acceptable before God 7:14-25. In this first verse of ch. 8, therefore, introducing as it does the central theological pronouncement of the passage. The declaration of "no condemnation" of 8:1 is supported by the explanatory statement here in 8:2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death."<sup>47</sup>

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156. Stanley E. Porter, *Paul and His Theology* (Boston: Leiden, 2006), 124.

157. Moo, *the Epistle to the Romans*, 467.

158. David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Maryland: Jewish New Testament, 1992), 80.

159. Longenecker, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Romans*, 858.

160. Moo, *the Epistle to the Romans*, 471.

Furthermore, Moo states the “therefore” at the beginning of the chapter indicates that Paul is drawing a conclusion. What immediately follows is the assertion that “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). The combination “ἄρα νῦν” (therefore, now)<sup>48</sup> is an emphatic one, marking what follows as a significant conclusion. The “now” alludes to the new era of salvation history inaugurated by Christ’s death and reassurance (6:19, 22; 7:6). “For those who are in Christ Jesus,” this era is marked by the wonderful announcement that “there is no condemnation” (Rom 8:1).<sup>49</sup>

In fact, the opening statement, with its connecting “therefore” (ἄρα), comes as a shock. How can the analysis of 7:7-25 lead to such a conclusion? “I of myself... serve the law of sin; there is therefore now no condemnation!” The answer is that Paul has leapfrogged over the middle premise of his argument. The apostle Paul has created a striking effect by advancing the truth what Christ had done for the sinner. There is therefore no condemnation, because God has dealt with sin in the flesh, and provided new life for the body.” The “now” picks up the “but now” of 3:21; 7:6; 6:22, emphasizing God’s achievement in Christ and by the Spirit. The verdict is the solid foundation for Christian joy. Sin’s condemnation has been effected in the cross of God’s Son (v.3).<sup>50</sup>

Paul’s fundamental explanation for v. 1 is God’s act of liberation. He has already spoken of this at length in chap. 6 and developed it in 7:1-6. As we have already seen, talk of setting slaves free is exodus language: The present paragraph is describing how those who are in the Messiah, and indwelt by the Spirit, are brought out of sin and death and promised of eternal life. The liberating action has taken place “in Christ Jesus.” Thus, “there is no condemnation for those in Christ, because in Christ God has set you free.” “No Condemnation.” Why? Because he received the curse of the law, but in him all

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161. Kurl Aland, ed., *The Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Society, 1966), 548.

162. Moo, *the Epistle to the Romans*, 473.

163. Wright, *NIB on Romans*, P, 210.



curses and sin are displaced by righteousness.<sup>51</sup> The situation of all humankind was “under sin and death.” Torah rightly endorsed this verdict, tightening the grip of Adamic humanness on those who were “under” its sway. God’s act of liberation has broken this stranglehold once and for all. The explanation of verse 2, after all, is found in vv. 3-4. We find that the “righteous verdict of the law,” is now fulfilled “in us who walk... according to the Spirit.” Whereas “the mind of the flesh” does not submit to God’s law, the mind of the Spirit actually does (v. 7).<sup>52</sup>

Paul’s discourse was on the inability of Law to make one righteous before God (7:7-25). Now contrast between the old era of Law, Sin, and Death and the era of Spirit, freedom, and Life (8:1- 2). The once-guilty have been acquitted and spared from “the wrath of God”.<sup>53</sup> The reality of no condemnation (v. 1) and Spirit-empowered freedom from Sin (v. 2) are both experienced in and through Christ Jesus. We are reminded of the two humanities: “in Adam” and “in Christ.” “The law of sin and death” occupied Paul in Romans chapters six and seven. But now in chapter eight, there is a new focus on the ministry of the Spirit. God’s work in Christ, mediated by the Spirit in 8:2-4 is the solution to the dilemma of *egō* in 7:7-25.<sup>54</sup> In fact, the “liberation” of 8:2 is the answer to the “imprisonment” of 7:23.<sup>55</sup>

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164. E.J. Waggoner, *Waggoner on Romans: The Gospel in Paul’s Great Letter* (Berrien Springs, MI: Glad Tiding, 2016), 143.

165. Wright, *NIB on Romans*, 211-212.

166. George Lyons and William M. Greathouse, *Romans: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Kansas, MO: Bean Hill, 2011), 226.

167. Moo, *the Epistle to the Romans*, 471.

168. *Ibid.*, 473.

#### ***4.4 Perspectives on the Law and the Old Man in the Larger Pauline Corpus***

##### ***4.4.1 A Comparison of the συν-Compounds in Romans 6:4-6 with Ephesians 2:5-10 and Colossians 2:12-13***

The apostle Paul demonstrates equivalent statements on the transition from an old man (nature) to a new man in Christ, vividly seen in these three passages. His point is our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ are experiences that transfer us from the old age to the new one. The resurrection of Jesus in Rom 6:4-6 means that those who are “in the Messiah” now stand, and must walk, on resurrection ground. Interestingly, Col. 2:12 and Eph 2:6, also refer to the Christian participation in the resurrection of Christ as already “realized” (Rom. 6:5), and the larger idea is that we belong to it. The argument is that one has died to sin and hence is already “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (v. 11) and must now live accordingly.<sup>56</sup> This work of transitioning has taken place during our conversion and has been accomplished through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. Christ's death and resurrection free the believer from sin; the Spirit's indwelling frees the believer from sin.<sup>57</sup>

The distinction is demanded by the next sentence: we were therefore buried (*synetaphēmen*, co-buried) with him through baptism into death (cf Rom 6:4; Col 2:12). The result of God's mercy and love is that he has “made us alive with Christ” (Eph. 2:5). This is the first of three verbs in Ephesians 2: 5-6 beginning with the Greek prefix *syn-* (“together with”): made alive with him, raised with him, seated with him. We who died in our sins (Eph 2: 1-3) found life in Christ. Yet this is not all, for we also share in his exaltation and are “seated with him [God] in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph 2: 6).” We participate in Christ's enthronement at the right hand of God the Father; we are

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169. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans*, 165.

170. Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 527.

seated with him and share his victory. Therefore, we now have power over the demonic forces and are enabled to live a life a life of victory and of good works in him.<sup>58</sup>

Paul's assertion goes beyond this to claim that God has made believers alive together with Christ. The verb used here, *sunezōpoiēsen* (made alive together), occurs in the NT only here and in the similar passage in Col 2:13. Paul does not use the simpler verb *zōpoiēsen* (making alive) very often either. In Ephesians it appears that Paul is speaking of something slightly different: Being made alive together with Christ means sharing in Christ's new life. Paul makes the bold assertion that God has rescued the Ephesians from death, from their captivity to sin.<sup>59</sup> Ephesians has the language of resurrection in a new way, stressing our present experience of resurrection without denying a future experience that is yet to come, a whole new way of living (2:10).<sup>60</sup>

Correspondingly, Col 2: 12-13 continues the discussion of the means of access by which believers have come to possess fullness in Christ. Believers received "the circumcision of Christ" when they were "buried with him in baptism." This verse shares so many things with Rom 6, particularly Col 2: 13-14. Col 2:13 restates and reframes the reality that v. 12 proclaims. The first image that v. 13 reuses with a different nuance is death. In Col 2:12, the old existence is put to death when the believer receives baptism; in v. 13, that prefaith existence is a form of being dead. This passage speaks of uncircumcised in both flesh and heart. Their pre-Christian lives of hostility toward God, and domination by sin amounted to death. But now God has acted to reverse all those things and has given them life.<sup>61</sup> Paul summarizes this great truth that he has been teaching in the simple words, anyone who has died has been set free from sin (6:7).<sup>62</sup>

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171. Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2017), 44.

172. Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2012), 74.

173. Mark D. Roberts, *the Story of God Bible Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 88.

174. Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). 124.

175. Solomon Andria, *Africa Bible Commentary Series* (Accra, Ghana: Hippobooks, 2012), 109.

Furthermore, in Romans 6:4, Paul “locates” our being buried with Christ “in baptism.” As we have seen, Colossians 2:12 has many parallels with Romans 6:3-11. Both texts assert that believers have been “buried with Christ in/ through baptism.” And both Romans and Colossians assert that believers participate with Christ in his resurrection. They also share the perspective of Ephesians (2:6). Our resurrection with Christ is pictured as a completed event: “you were also raised with him” (v. 12); “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ” (3:1).<sup>63</sup> Paul then mentions baptism, which depicts how believers were buried with him and also raised with him. The whole ritual served to highlight their experience of participation in the Messiah’s passion and vivification by the Father (Rom 6:4–6; Eph 2:5–6). In the circumcision of the Messiah the old uncircumcised flesh is stripped away and a new person is brought to life.<sup>64</sup> Paul claims that it is “in Christ” that we are “circumcised” by having our sinful impulse “stripped off.” In vv. 12-15 Paul elaborates this “in Christ.” Christians have participated “with” Christ in his burial and resurrection (v. 12), bringing us new life in him (v. 13) by virtue of having our sins forgiven (vv. 13b-15).<sup>65</sup> The decrees and condemnation of the Torah are singularly swept aside through his atoning death.<sup>66</sup>

In Colossians 2:13 being made alive with Christ is closely associated with the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from principalities and powers (vv. 13-15). Paul draws attention to a mighty rescue initiative by God through Christ. This joyful news provides a summary of what God has already done in making them alive together with Christ, raising them up with in parallel to Rom 7: 25; 8:1. It indicates what God did for Christ, he did at the same time for believers.<sup>67</sup> “In respect to your trespasses and sins” defines their former state of death as one of moral death, such as Paul vividly describes in

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176. Ibid., 187-8.

177. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon: A New Covenant Commentary*, 95.

178. Douglas J. Moo, *the Letter to Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2000), 186.

179. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon: A New Covenant Commentary*, 95.

180. Moo, *the Letter to Colossians and to Philemon*, 194-5.

Romans 7:7–25, especially 7:9–13, 24; 8:6; 6:21–23. This moral death ends, apart from faith in Christ, in eternal death. Stressing the moral death is Paul’s use of both “trespasses” and “sins.” Paul interrupts his sentence with the exclamation, “by grace you’ve been saved!” By grace indeed, “for our trespasses made our salvation ill-deserved.”<sup>68</sup> It is God’s workmanship from first to last; believers have been created in Christ Jesus for good works. Correspondingly, the role of Christ in bringing such righteousness to God’s people apart from the Law lies in their identification with him in his death and resurrection which provide right standing with God and as lived-out righteousness (Rom. 6:1-7:6).<sup>69</sup>

#### ***4.4.2 The Putting off of the παλαιός ἄνθρωπος in Romans 6:6 and Ephesians 4:24***

For Jewish people, baptism was the act by which non-Jews converted to Judaism, the final removal of Gentile impurity; by it one turned one’s back on life in paganism and sin, vowed to follow God’s commandments, and became a new person with regard to Jewish law. A person who became a follower of Jesus likewise gave up his or her old life. Through participation with Christ’s death, Paul says, their death is to the old life in sin, which was crucified in Christ, an accomplished fact (Rom. 6:6-7). The “old man” (“old self” in many translations) is life in Adam versus life in Christ (5:12-21). The first step toward experiencing this new, abundant Christ life is knowing this: That “our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with” (Rom. 6:6).<sup>70</sup>

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181. Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 20- 22.

182. Pater T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 95, 201.

183. Keener, *the IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament*, 733.

184. Charles R. Swindoll, *Living Insights on Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: Tyndale House, 2015),

Similarly, Paul expresses the same concept here in Ephesians 4:24: the “new person” is a new kind of life. In that case, the “old person” stands for the nature and behavior of the old life. Therefore, when Paul uses the word “person” he is not referring to a person’s body and soul but to his life, interests and acts.<sup>71</sup> After the Ephesian believers have rid themselves of the power of the “old self,” their mindset must be “made new.” Thus our thinking processes must be made new by God. Until this happens we cannot truly embrace the “new self” of (Eph. 4: 24). After the old, filthy garments have been discarded, it is time for us to be clothed with the “new self” (4:24), when the old nature has been crucified with Christ and our minds have been renewed, we become a new creature (2 Cor 5:17), a miracle accomplished by God, through Christ. The old self was in Adam, part of sinful humanity, so now the new self is “in Christ,” part of regenerate humanity. As unbelievers we were under the power of sin and death, enslaved by our senses and doomed for eternity. There was no hope for us. Then God intervened and sent his Son to die on the cross to bring redemption and forgiveness.<sup>72</sup> “The old human being” is what you were, so far as your conduct was concerned, prior to conversion. It was also deadly, propelling you toward eternal death (cf 1Cor. 15:42, 50, 53–54 with Rom 6:21–23). By converting, you put it off the way you take off dirty clothes. Putting off the old human being required, and resulted in, your “being renewed in the spirit of your mind.” You put it on at conversion the way you put on clean clothes.<sup>73</sup>

Their conduct, therefore, needs to be consistent with their new position and status in Christ. The apostle, therefore, has drawn a clear distinction between the way of life which characterized “the old humanity” and that which marked out “the new” (4:17-24)<sup>74</sup> The “new self” (v. 24) is literally “the new person,” who is (literally) “created according to God,” which means according to his image or likeness. Paul points out, one should live

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185. Gerald L. Bray, *Galatians, Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 356.

186. Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2017), 98-99.

187. Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), P, 46.

188. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 328-9.

accordingly.<sup>75</sup> The new self is who believers now are in terms of their solidarity with Christ. It also involves an actualization of this identity in their daily experience through a transformed way of thinking (4:23), bringing their lives into conformity with the defining characteristics of this new identity: righteousness and holiness. The new self is not simply a renewal of the old self; it is a new creation.<sup>76</sup>

The way non-Christians think is fully corrupt, which leads them to engage in impure conduct and they are thoroughly corrupt or depraved (4: 17, 22-23). The end result is that they are separated from the one true God (v. 18b). To live like unbelievers in unrighteousness and impurity is utterly inconsistent with who we now are in Christ. Therefore, Paul reminds his readers that they were instructed to take off the old self and put on the new self (Eph. 22–24). Because they are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, this change of identities has already taken place. They have already been transformed. Because Christ has died to sin and has been resurrected to a newness of life. We live in a relationship of solidarity with our living Lord. We have effectively participated with Christ in the key salvation events. The fact that Paul has exhorted believers to do so implies that substantial personal effort will be involved.<sup>77</sup>

#### ***4.4.3 The Putting off of the τό σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας/τῆς σαρκός in Romans 6:6 and Colossians 2:11***

Both Romans 6: 6 and Colossians 2:11 describe the same term and concept of our old man (old nature) and a new life in Christ. Romans 6:6 refers τό σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, the body of sin control by the unregenerate nature with its downward tendency, the "old Adam." Here, sin found a ready accomplice, but Christ rendered it inoperative. This

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189. Keener, *the IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament*, 931.

190. Clinton E. Arnold, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* (Florida: Zondervan), 447-8.

191. *Ibid.*, 453.

"body of sin" is more than an individual affair; it is rather that old solidarity of sin and death which all share "in Adam." It has been broken by the death of Christ, with a view to the creation of the new solidarity of righteousness and life. Believers are made part of a new solidarity "in Christ."<sup>78</sup> The man who dies with Jesus does not merely have his sins forgiven, but is actually delivered from the power of sin: he is no longer its slave (Rom. 6: 6). What Paul means is that the believer is delivered from the power of sin that he was enslaved to while he was in the old nature.<sup>79</sup>

Paul unpacks this idea in the second half of 2:11, using two phrases to convey the means "by" which true salvation/circumcision of converts takes place. Colossians 2: 11 also refers the *τό σῶμα τῆς σαρκός*, the body of flesh. This *sarx* refers to the sinful impulse that dominates the body of the non-Christian, which body is stripped off in the circumcision accomplished by Christ. And this, in turn, makes it likely that the phrase "uncircumcision of your flesh" the bold language that Paul has used in v. 11, is the condition that "Christ's circumcision" removes. The condition of having "flesh" is the sinful impulse or "sinful nature," that has not yet been stripped off. Paul thus attributes spiritual "deadness" both to "the actual definite transgressions" and to "the impure carnal disposition which prompts to them."<sup>80</sup>

The believers then hear their metaphorical or spiritual "circumcision" (2:11) further described as "having been buried with" Christ (Rom 6:6; Col. 2:12a). In accord with the parallelism between 2:11 and 2:12, the audience's circumcision is "in (ἐν) the removal of the body of the flesh" (2:11b). It is in and through their baptism then that the believers have experienced the "removal" of the body of the flesh. They now have the "circumcision" of the Christ, by which they became part of the body of Christ, the church. Their having been "buried with" Christ in their baptism is thus part of their having

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192. F. F Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 138.

193. Grant R. Osborne, *Colossians & Philemon Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2016), 144.

194. *Ibid.*, 185-6.



received the Christ (2:6) and appropriated the reconciliation God accomplished for them in the body of the flesh of Christ through his sacrificial death (1:22a). Not only have the sinners been “buried with” Christ in their baptism, but “in him indeed you were raised with him through faith in the working of the God who raised him from the dead” (2:12c). In their union with Christ, “in whom indeed” (ἐν ᾧ καὶ) they were “circumcised” with a “circumcision” not made with hands. That is, the “circumcision” of the Christ (2:11), with whom they were “buried” (συνταφέντες) in their baptism (2:12ab) is elaborated by the parallel assertion that “in whom indeed” (ἐν ᾧ καὶ) “you were raised with” (συνηγέρθητε) Christ. The believers are to realize everything that has happened to them in their union with the Christ whom they have received (2:6), in whom they have been raised.<sup>81</sup>

In Romans 6 Paul teaches that it is through identification with these three key redemptive-historical events that Christians have been set free from sin: they have “died with Christ,” they have been “buried with him,” and they will be “united with him in a resurrection like his.” Moreover, it is in conjunction with baptism that believers are so identified with these events (vv. 3, 4). The parallel with Colossians 2:11-12 is obvious. Here also it is through baptism that believers are “buried with him” and “raised with him.” All that is missing from the sequence is “dying with Christ,” which, on this interpretation, is found in v. 11.<sup>82</sup> “Body of flesh,” on this view, will be equivalent to “body of sin” in Romans 6:6. Paul intends to describe the body not as sinful in itself but as under the domination of sin/the flesh (cf. also “body of death” Rom. 7:24; “body of humiliation,” Phil. 3:21; note Col. 3:5, where Paul commands us to “put to death” our “earthly members”).<sup>83</sup> In other words, the putting off the body of flesh, the circumcision

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195. John Paul Heil, *Colossians: Encouragement to Walk in All Wisdom as Holy Ones in Christ* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 134.

196. Douglas J. Moo, *the Letter to Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 200), 185.

197. *Ibid.*, 192.

done by the Messiah is that which characterizes those who belong to the Messiah. That is to say, a messianic circumcision of the heart that brings new life.<sup>84</sup>

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198. Michel F. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth, 2009), 94.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION: ROMANS 7:7-25 AS A DIVERSION THE UNREGENERATED PERSPECTIVE

#### *5.1. The Importance of the Transitional Statement in 7:1: "I speak to Those Who Know the Law:" the Jewish Segment of the Church in Romans*

The apostle Paul takes a break from advancing his case for Christian hope in his epistle to the Romans, pausing in chapters 6 and 7 to address the concerns that jeopardize their future hope: namely sin and the Mosaic law. Paul explains in Romans 6 how our sins enslave and lead us to death, but that Christ has set us free. Paul begins Chapter 7 with the phrase (which the NRSV and the NIV both omit), which in Greek is the single letter ἢ (ē, “or”). As usual with the connections, the word matters: he is looking back to Rom 6:14-15. “You are not under the law ... or do you not know that the law only rules over someone during their lifetime?” Paul emphasizes in the first six verses of the chapter that a death has indeed occurred that results in the Christian’s being “no longer under the law.”<sup>1</sup> Also, the word ἀδελφοί (*adelphoi*, brothers) indicates a new section commences.<sup>2</sup> And by addressing them as a brother, he is identifying himself with ethnic Israel, Israel under the Torah. This is convincing that he is speaking as the “I” throughout 7:7-25.<sup>3</sup> Paul now shifts his focus and audience from general to specific, as seen in Romans 7.

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199. N. T. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 190.

200. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Evangelical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 313.

201. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans*, 190.

The audience of Paul's opening passage in Romans 7:1 is specific. He addresses his audience as "brothers," "those who know the law." Some scholars (e.g., Morris, Dunn, and others) argue Paul's Romans audience was predominantly Gentile converts or God-fearers prior to their conversion to Christ (1:5-7, 13-15 cf. the introduction).<sup>4</sup> However, this is unlikely. For, there is clear evidence where Paul seeks to address the Jewish segment separately from the Gentiles (e.g. Rom 2:1-29, especially 2:17: Gentile 11:13). We must remember that Paul never uses the term *nomos* to refer to the law anywhere else in the New Testament, while he does use it to refer to the Mosaic law in 6: 14, 15, and he refers to the Mosaic law throughout much of Chapter 7. Fitzmeyer gives a sensible statement on this; now *nomos* is understood as the Mosaic law, because of the illustration that Paul uses in the following verses, 2 and 3, which is taken from that law.<sup>5</sup> We also know that Paul makes multiple references to the "law" in this chapter (*nomos*).<sup>6</sup> As a result, "this is most likely the circumstance for narrowing his audience to the Jews in verse 1," according to Moo.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is obvious that Paul's reference to the Roman church as brothers of an expert in law in verse 1 indicates that he is restricting his teaching in this passage to the segment of the Jewish Christians who "know" the law.

## 5.2. *The Obvious Continuity Between Romans 6 and 8*

The apostle Paul shows a clear continuity in these two chapters when it comes to the position of Christians. In chapter six, Paul explains how we Christians have been set free from the dominion of sin. Sin can no longer be the defining quality of a Christian's life. Sin is no longer in charge. In the same way, Romans chapter eight explains how the Holy Spirit works to empower believers to overcome the powers of evil and sin. It depicts

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202. Morris, *the Epistle to Romans*, 270.

203. Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *the Anchor Bible: Romans* (New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing, 1992), 457.

204. Douglas J Moo, *the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 421.

205. Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 117.

a new and glorious life for a person who puts their trust in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and begins a new relationship with the Holy Spirit's work. These two chapters demonstrate that "no one who has been set free from sin's dominant power can live as if sin is still in charge."<sup>8</sup> Their status, state, and master are no longer defined by sin. They have died to sin and live in the Spirit's guidance rather than the law and sins.<sup>9</sup> According to the apostle Paul, baptism is the means by which believers are actually "co-buried" with Jesus and share in his death. If one is dead and buried in sin, it is difficult to "keep on sinning."<sup>10</sup> What Paul is referring to in 6:4–7 is the direct influence of Jesus' resurrection on the believer's life now, namely, that "we might walk" in the newness of life (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:25).<sup>11</sup> Although grace abounds where sin abounds, this is no excuse for knowingly piling on the sin. A man cannot be both dead and living at the same time. We are reconciled to God through Christ's death and saved; we are being set free from sin; hence, we are "saved through his life" and have "passed from death to life." The enmity-filled existence of sin has come to an end with Christ's death.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, believers are now in a position where they do not need to offer themselves in service to sin and reap its death penalties (6:1-23). The indwelling of the Spirit and the prospect of the Spirit wonderfully transforming the body of believers leads to the inevitable conclusion that believers are not indebted to the flesh but to the Spirit. "As a result, believers, we have a commitment — but it is not to live according to the flesh" (Rom 8: 12). Christians are individuals who have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who have been set free from sin and death, and who have been given the ability to resist the flesh.<sup>13</sup> The Spirit you got does not imprison you so that you live in fear again;

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206. Michael F. Bird, *the Story of God Bible Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 269.

207. Karl Barth, *the Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 191.

208. Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 398.

209. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans*, 538.

210. E. J. Waggoner, *Waggoner on Romans: The Gospel in Paul's Great Letter* (Berrien Springs, MI: Glad Tiding, 2016), 124.

211. Bird, *the Story of God Bible Commentary: Romans*, 269.

instead, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship" when Paul writes about believers being "guided," being adopted as "sons," and escaping "slavery" in Rom 8:14–17. (Rom.8: 15a). Paul then goes on to explain how the Spirit and sonship are linked. He claims at first that it isn't slavery. Christians were enslaved by sin and placed under the law (Rom 6:6, 16–17, 20; 7:14, 25), but they have been set free by Christ and the Spirit (6:7, 18, 22; 7:6; 8:15), and they are now slaves of righteousness (6:18–19, 22). Romans 8:1–17 focuses on how the Spirit gives Christians life and provides them sonship.<sup>14</sup>

Those who are in Christ share his death (6:3–4), a death that was rightfully incurred as a result of Adamic humanity's transgression (5:12, 15, 17, 21). However, because Christ was righteous, yet embraced Adamic flesh and death (8:3), he not only personified death to the old path, but also inaugurated a new way of righteousness and life for those who are connected with him (5:18–19). Those who are in Christ are no longer in Adam's realm. Hence, they are "dead" to their previous sin (6:5–7) and even death (6:8–10), at least in a proleptic sense that will affect their resurrection someday. "Glory" (6:4) may conjure up the hope of resurrection (8:18, 21, 30), a glorified body (1 Cor 15:40–43; Phil 3:21), resurrected by the Spirit (Rom 8:10–11; cf. 1 Cor 15:43–44). By the Spirit, they "walk" (*peripate*) in newness of life (8:4; Gal 5:16). The "newness" that the law could not offer is provided by God's Spirit (7:6), and this new identity and role in Christ contrasts with the old person in Adam (6:6). Paul emphasizes in 6:5 that believers are in a phase of "eschatological tension," in which they already walk in newness, free of sin, but still await the resurrection of their bodies (6:5; 8:23).<sup>15</sup> Whoever thinks or feels himself to be dead will not sin," Keener says, referring to Origen. After establishing that believers are, in principle, dead to sin and that their identity is defined

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212. Ibid., 272.

213. Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary Series* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth, 2009), 113–14.

214. Ibid., 99–100.

by their union and future with Christ, Paul now exhorts them to live as such. If they are no longer slaves to sin (6:6), sin must no longer reign (*basileu*) or rule (*kurieu*) in them (6:12; cf. 5:14, 17, 21; 6:14; cf. 6:9; 7:1; 14:9). They must be enslaved people who, rather than sin, obey God and righteousness (6:16–22). They must have an obedience that comes from the heart, an inner transformation that results in a desire to obey God's commands (Rom 8;5-9). And this "obedience" indicated that they had forsaken their previous way of life, in which they had used whatever freedom they had to pursue their own interests, and had now recognized a new lord and master over their lives, namely Christ (cf. 6:23; 10:9–10; 11:9–10; 12:9–10).<sup>16</sup>

### ***5.3 The Contradictions Between Romans 7:7-25 and the Argument of Romans 6 and 8.***

#### ***5.3.1 The Opposite Perspective in Romans 7***

Several important theological and practical issues raised in Romans 7 (especially verses 14-20) divide Christian exegetes and lead us to different conclusions. When we look closely into this chapter, there are seemingly contradictory concepts in Romans seven. First off, Paul emphasizes strongly that believers are free from the law as a regulatory norm (Rom 6:14; 7:1, 5–6) and that they need to stand fast in this freedom (Gal 5:1) so as to bear fruit for God (Rom 7:4–6).<sup>17</sup> Paul addresses “those who know the law” (Rom 7:1), and reminds them that “the law is binding on a person only during that person’s lifetime.” He reinforces his reminder with an analogy based upon marriage law (Rom 7:2–4), arguing that just as the death of a husband discharges his widow from any obligation to observe the law that bound her to him, so likewise the death of Christ

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215. Stanley E. Porter, *Paul and His Theology* (Boston: Leiden, 2006), 109.

216. *Ibid.*, 117.

discharges believers from their obligation to obey the law (of Moses). It is through justification and the reception of the Spirit that believers are delivered from sin's dominion. Christians have died to sin" through the body of Christ" and they are freed from the law and the law has no more claim on them (7:2, 3, 4b). In Romans 7:1-6 Paul has asserted that through the death of Christ believers are freed from the law.

On the other hand, Paul now analyzes the "I" that is caught up in sin and hence in death. To do this, he contrasts the true nature of Torah with the nature of the human being (and the Jew precisely as a person "in Adam"). The Torah is spiritual, he says, but "I: am "fleshly," sold under sin, i.e., a bond-slave to sin. He also continues; what "I" do is not what "I" want, but what "I" hate. Here is definitely the paradox of Israel under Torah; seeing what is right thing to do, delighting in it and wanting to perform it, and yet discovering it cannot be performed. We must stress, as with 2:17-29, that Paul is not here talking about each individual Jew. He knew himself to have been "blameless in terms of righteousness under the law" (Phil. 3:6). He is talking of Israel as a whole. His point here is the vivid rhetorical "I," to present the plight of Israel-as-a-whole under Torah's picture of a truly human life, deeply honoring to God, and constantly as a people striving to attain it. Though "I" basically agrees with Torah, and confirms its goodness, while observing that in its own life it cannot perform the good things Torah prescribes. The result of his actions are the "sin that dwells in me". Here Paul contrasts the indwelling of the Spirit in the believers in 7:6. The initial conclusion picks up from the description of the "I" in vv 15-16, 17-20, in order to work back from there to what can be concluded about "the law." This is what I find about the law: it means for me, "when I want to do good, that to me evil lies close at hand." Paul in 7:7-12 alluded to Adam (5:20) that when Torah arrived in Israel, Israel recapitulated Adam's sin. Paul now puts together a fresh formulation of what he has said about Torah on one hand and about the "I" on the other. Thus the "I" of chapter 7 remains frustrated, rightly delighted in the Torah but finding



that the solidarity of Israel with Adam prevents performance and, consequently, bars the way to life. The Torah itself, then, simply binds sinners to Adam: But now finally Paul comes back to the first part of the chapter: God has done what the Torah could not do.<sup>18</sup> He describes how the power of sin (admittedly using the law as an unwilling ally) that caused the “I” of Rom 7:7–25 so much anguish.<sup>19</sup> This is how Paul presents his discussion of the freedoms achieved for humanity by Christ Jesus. The convicted man is under the law but is not converted: “If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that It is good.” The fact that I do not wish to do the sins that I am committing shows the acknowledgement of the righteousness of the law which forbids it. It is not enough to desire to do right.<sup>20</sup> This is truly a natural man (without Christ) and that mode of life is contrasted with life in “the Spirit” (7:6; cf. 8:9).<sup>21</sup>

### ***5.3.2 The "Then" and "Now" Perspective in Romans 6-8***

Paul reminds the Romans that they have already died with Christ through their baptism and now live in a “newness of life,” a life determined by the power of God’s Spirit rather than by the power of sin (Rom. 6:8-11). In Christ, they are no longer slaves of sin and death (Romans 6). Moreover, because if they belong to the realm of God’s grace, they are no longer under a law frustrated by sin (Romans 7). Having explained the new freedom that the justified enjoy in Christ, the new Adam, now in Romans 8 Paul describes the new life they live in the realm of God’s Spirit. The chapter consists of three

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217. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans*, 207.

218. *Ibid.*, 124.

219. Waggoner, *Waggoner on Romans: The Gospel in Paul’s Great Letter*, 140.

220. T. L. Carter, *Paul and the Power of Sin: Redefining Beyond the Pale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 459.

sections. In the first, Paul portrays the Spirit as the source of the new life that believers enjoy (8:1-17). Paul presents the Spirit as the source of their hope (8:18-30).<sup>22</sup>

In general, the apostle Paul presents two terms: “the flesh” and “the Spirit.” These terms are diametrically opposed to each other. The flesh is a metaphor for a way of life that is opposed to God. It is the realm of sin and death; it is the realm in which Adam and the old humanity dwell. In contrast to the flesh, the Spirit refers to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. Unlike the flesh, the Spirit is immortal, the source of life. Those who live in the realm of the Spirit are in Christ, the new Adam. Although those who are in the Spirit will die (just as Christ died), the Spirit is their assurance of resurrection from the dead. According to Pauline anthropology, human beings are either “in the flesh” or “in the Spirit.” We have learned that we belong to Christ who is the new Adam, the obedient Son of God. We have learned that so long as we belong to Christ, the powers of sin and death can no longer control and threaten our lives. Paul means that we no longer belong to the realm of sin and death. We belong to the realm of God’s Spirit. Here Paul means is that, to be sure, we still face suffering, death and struggle with evils in this world (this is not a conflict in Romans 7), as we have not yet reached the final goal of our life. But something has changed. Something is different. Whereas formerly our lives were under the power of sin, this is no longer the case. Whereas formerly our lives were threatened by eternal separation from God, this is no longer the case. Living in the realm of God’s Spirit, the power of God’s Spirit is at work in us. The power of God’s Spirit enables us to do what we formerly could not do. The power of God’s Spirit assures us of new and lasting life. Christian identity from Paul’s letter to the Romans: our identity is grounded and rooted in Christ, the new Adam. Paul describes this identity in terms of being in the Spirit rather than being in the flesh.<sup>23</sup>

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221. Frank J. Matera, *Proclaiming God's Saving Grace: A Paul Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 45-46.

222. *Ibid.*, 50 - 51.

The antithesis between the two states, which has already been explored in chap. 6 from the standpoint of baptism and the release of the slaves, is repeated or alluded to several times in the present passage: 7:5-6 serves, as an introductory statement, 8: 5-10 offers further development, leading towards the conclusion, with echoes of 5:21 still prominent, in 8:10-11. We must give full weight to Paul's repeated assertions, throughout 6:1-8:11, that the baptized Christian is not "in sin," not "in the flesh," not "under the law." The whole point of the argument of chapter 6, was to emphasize that the Christian is not "in Adam," but that "the old man" has died with Christ." You were once slaves of sin, but you are now slaves of righteousness; 6: 22 repeats the point. Rom 7: 4-6 then repeats it again from another point of view: "you died to the law... so that you might belong to another." "When we were in the flesh, the passions of sin, through the law, were at work ... but now we are set free from the law ... to be enslaved in the newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter." It is simply impossible, after this often-repeated statement, to suppose that Paul will then expound a view of the Christian in which he or she is, after all, "fleshly, sold under sin" (7:14), or that he or she is "enslaved to the law of sin" (7:25). What is more, Paul makes abundantly clear in 8:9: "you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit."<sup>24</sup>

### ***5.3.3 The Synonymity of τό σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, τό σῶμα τῆς σαρκός, and τό σῶμα τοῦ θανάτου***

A careful study of these three terms shows they are equivalent. First off, note τό σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, (*to sōma tēs hamartias*, the body of sin), that Paul explains in Rom 6:6. The "old self" (ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος *palaios hēmōn anthrōpos*), which used to be translated "our old man," denotes, not some particular part of the human person, but rather the whole person, the entire self, seen as someone "in Adam." Paul's point is that

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223. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans*, 183.

in baptism the old Adamic solidarity is decisively broken. The “old self,” whole and entire, is put to death once and for all. The meaning of the “the old self,” and the abolition of “the body of sin” is the result of the crucifixion of “the old self” they cannot be identical. Thus they are free to live under a different lordship. It is the moment of each person’s conversion that is in view, that moment when one is “circumcised by Christ” and the “sinful nature is put off.”<sup>25</sup>

In Romans 6 Paul teaches that it is through identification with these three key redemptive-historical events that Christians have been set free from sin: they have “died with Christ,” they have been “buried with him,” and they will be “united with him in a resurrection like his.” The parallel with Colossians 2:11-12 is obvious. Here also it is through baptism that believers are “buried with him” and “raised with him.”<sup>26</sup> We now head to the second word, τό σῶμα τῆς σαρκός (the body of flesh), in Col 2:11, a metaphor in the context of the conquering of the power of sin that takes place when a person comes to Christ. “Body of flesh,” on this view, will be equivalent to “body of sin” in Romans 6:6. In both verses Paul intends to describe the body not as sinful in itself but as under the domination of sin and the flesh (cf. also “body of death” [Rom. 7:24]; “body of humiliation” Phil. 3:21; and note Col. 3:5, where Paul commands us to “put to death” our “earthly members” (TNIV, “whatever belongs to your earthly nature”). In line with the circumcision metaphor, it is this body of flesh, not simply a piece of flesh (as in physical circumcision), that is “put off” or “stripped off.” The latter verse expresses a concept similar to what we are advocating here, speaking of the “old self” as having been “stripped off.” The “circumcision of the heart” that Moses called for and that Paul identified as marking the new covenant people of God has been definitively accomplished in our union with Christ.<sup>27</sup>

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224. Ibid., 168.

225. Douglas J. Moo, *the Letter to Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 185.

226. Ibid., 186.

The Greek here is ἀνθρώπος (*anthrōpos*, “human being”). This, indeed, is the point: that Israel too is “in Adam,” like all other human beings. This “I” finds itself unable to escape from “this body of death,” referring perhaps both to its own “fleshly” (Col. 2:11), state but also to the solidarity of sin, of Adamic humanity, with which it is unavoidably bound up (cf 6:6). The problem is not only the sin itself, but the death that results from it. “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is Torah” (1 Cor 15: 56). We can now conclude Paul’s description of τό σῶμα τοῦ θανάτου (the body of dead), denotes his pre-Christian situation as a Jew who reverences the Mosaic law but finds that the power of sin is too strong to enable him to comply with the demands of that law, as he has put it in v. 14b, “I am fleshly, sold under sin.” No wonder, then, that he decries his condition and calls out for deliverance: “Wretched person I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?” Paul has been showing how *egō*, because of the law, has been brought into condemnation because of the reigning power of sin. Here, in the personal plea that brings to a climax the narrative of vv. 7-23, the condition from which deliverance is sought can be nothing but the condition Paul has depicted in these verses: the status of the person under sentence of spiritual death, condemned, bound for hell.<sup>28</sup>

At salvation, “our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin” (Rom. 6:6). As a result, “if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17). Believers have been freed from sin’s dominance and judgment. This objective conclusion is a key reason why I think that the “I” Paul describes here cannot be a Christian. Believers are no longer held captive by “the law of sin” (Rom. 8:2). They have been delivered from sin’s authority and death-dealing power through Jesus Christ. It is this deliverance that Paul celebrates. “This conclusion is a key reason why I think that the ‘I’ Paul describes here cannot be a Christian. Believers are no longer

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227. Douglas J Moo, *the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 465-6.

held captive by ‘the law of sin’ (Rom. 8:2). They have been delivered from sin’s authority and death-dealing power through Jesus Christ. It is this deliverance that Paul celebrates in verses 24–25a. Apart from Christ, he is “wretched,” but God has delivered him from that state of dejection and defeat through Jesus Christ the Lord. Paul, looking back on his past life and reflecting on its struggles and tensions, cannot restrain himself from celebrating the victory he has experienced in Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

#### ***5.4 The Evidence from Ephesians and Colossians***

Paul’s letters to the believers in Ephesians and Colossians connect with his message in Rom 6 and the first part of Romans 7 in a complete contrast with the inner struggle and outcry of Rom 7:14-20. In his two letters, he explains our death to the old humanity and a new life as a new humanity in Christ. He implies that it is the moment of each person’s conversion that is in view, that moment when one is “circumcised by Christ” and the “sinful nature is put off.” In Romans 6 Paul teaches that it is through identification with these three key redemptive-historical events that Christians have been set free from sin: they have “died with Christ,” they have been “buried with him,” and they will be “united with him in a resurrection like his.” The parallel with Colossians 2:11-12 is obvious. Here also it is through baptism that believers are “buried with him” and “raised with him.” By being identified with Christ in these key redemptive events, Christians experience in themselves the “change of eras” that God in Christ has brought to pass. No longer are we dominated by those “powers” of the old era, sin, death, and the flesh; we are now ruled by righteousness, life, grace, and the Spirit (see esp. Rom. 5:12-8:17; 12:1-2). <sup>30</sup>

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228. Wright, *NIB Commentary on Romans*, 184.

229. Douglas J. Moo, *the Letter to Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 185.

As we have seen, Colossians 2:12 has many parallels with Romans 6:3-11. Both texts assert that believers have been “buried with Christ in through baptism.” Colossians does not explicitly assert that believers have “died with Christ,” 2:20; “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him” (Rom 2: 8). In Colossians, however, sharing the perspective of Ephesians (2:6), our resurrection with Christ is pictured as a completed event: “you were also raised with him” (2. 12); “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ” (3:1).<sup>31</sup> In the parallel Ephesians (2:1, 5), both terms occur: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions (*paraptmasin*) and sins (*hamartiais*), . . . (God) made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions (*paraptmasin*).” In Col 2: 11, as we have seen, *sarx* refers to the sinful impulse that dominates the body of the non-Christian, which body is stripped off in the circumcision accomplished by Christ. Christians strip off the body of flesh in conversion and are thus freed from its power (2:11; 3: 9). Ultimately, then, the imperative “put to death” in this is a call to respond to, and cooperate with, the transformative power that is already operative within us.<sup>32</sup>

Paul uses similar language, as we have noted above, in Ephesians 4:22-24, where he summarizes the gospel that the Ephesians were taught as involving a putting off of the old self and a putting on of the new, and in Romans 6:6, where he affirms that “our old self was crucified with him (Christ).” These contextual clues suggest strongly that, for Paul, the “old self,” or “old man,” is first of all Adam and the “new self,” or “new man,” is Christ. It is therefore our “Adamic” identification, with its servitude to sin, that we have “put off” in coming to Christ. We have been brought into a new realm of existence, a realm in which the “old self,” Adam and all that he represents, no longer dictates our

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230. Ibid., 188.

231. Ibid., 192, 7.

thinking or our behavior. We are no longer identified with Adam, and his sin and death no longer rule us (Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:9-10).<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, in Colossians 3:1-4, Paul has called on us to take a “heavenly” perspective on all of life, a perspective that emerges naturally from our new identity as those who have died with Christ and been raised with him. The penalty and curse of the Torah is undone as its punitive effects are absorbed in the flesh of the Son of God (see Rom 8:3; Gal 3:13). Without the power of sin and law, the powers are now disarmed. Just as they died to the law (Gal 2:19; Rom 7:4), the Colossians themselves are raised and seated with Messiah (2:12; 3:1–2)<sup>34</sup> They are to walk in righteousness and holiness from the power of renewal working in them because Messiah dwells in them.<sup>35</sup> Once under the regime of the old self (4:22), they are now glad to shed this dominion and accept a new control, the new nature (Eph 4: 24).<sup>36</sup> As such, the new person stands in sharp contrast to “the old humanity” that is perishing in (Romans 7: 14-25).<sup>37</sup>

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232. Ibid., 239.

233. Ibid., 197.

234. Michel F. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth, 2009), 95.

235. Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossian, and Philemon: Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 59.

236. Pater T. O’Brien, *the Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 327.



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